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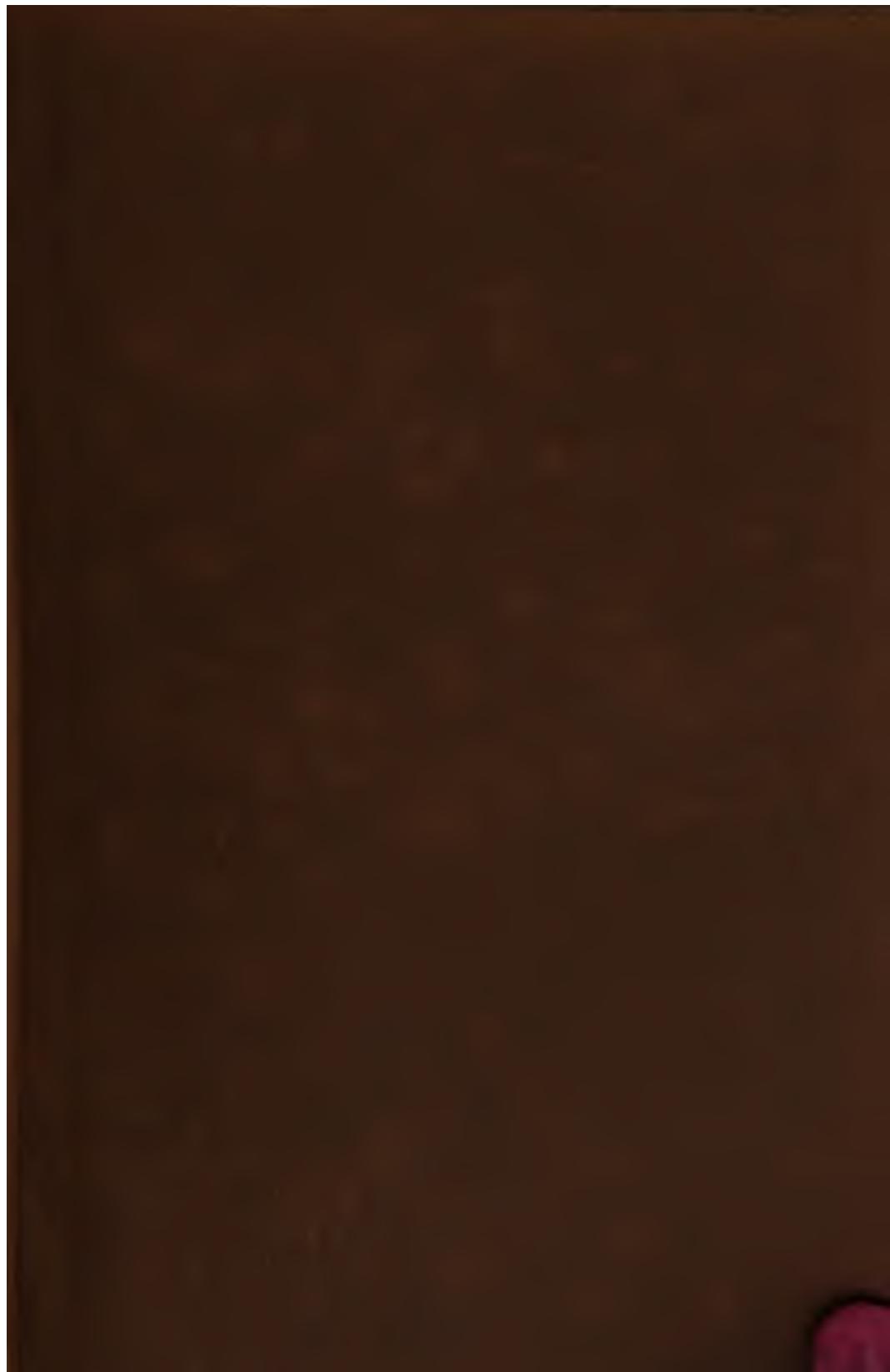
THE THREE PHASES OF CHRISTIAN LOVE
BY MARY HERBERT OF LEGH





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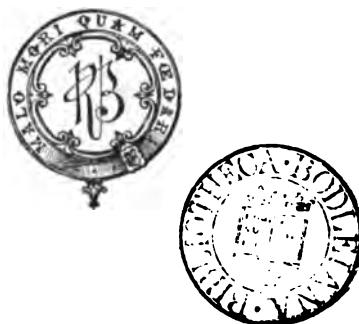






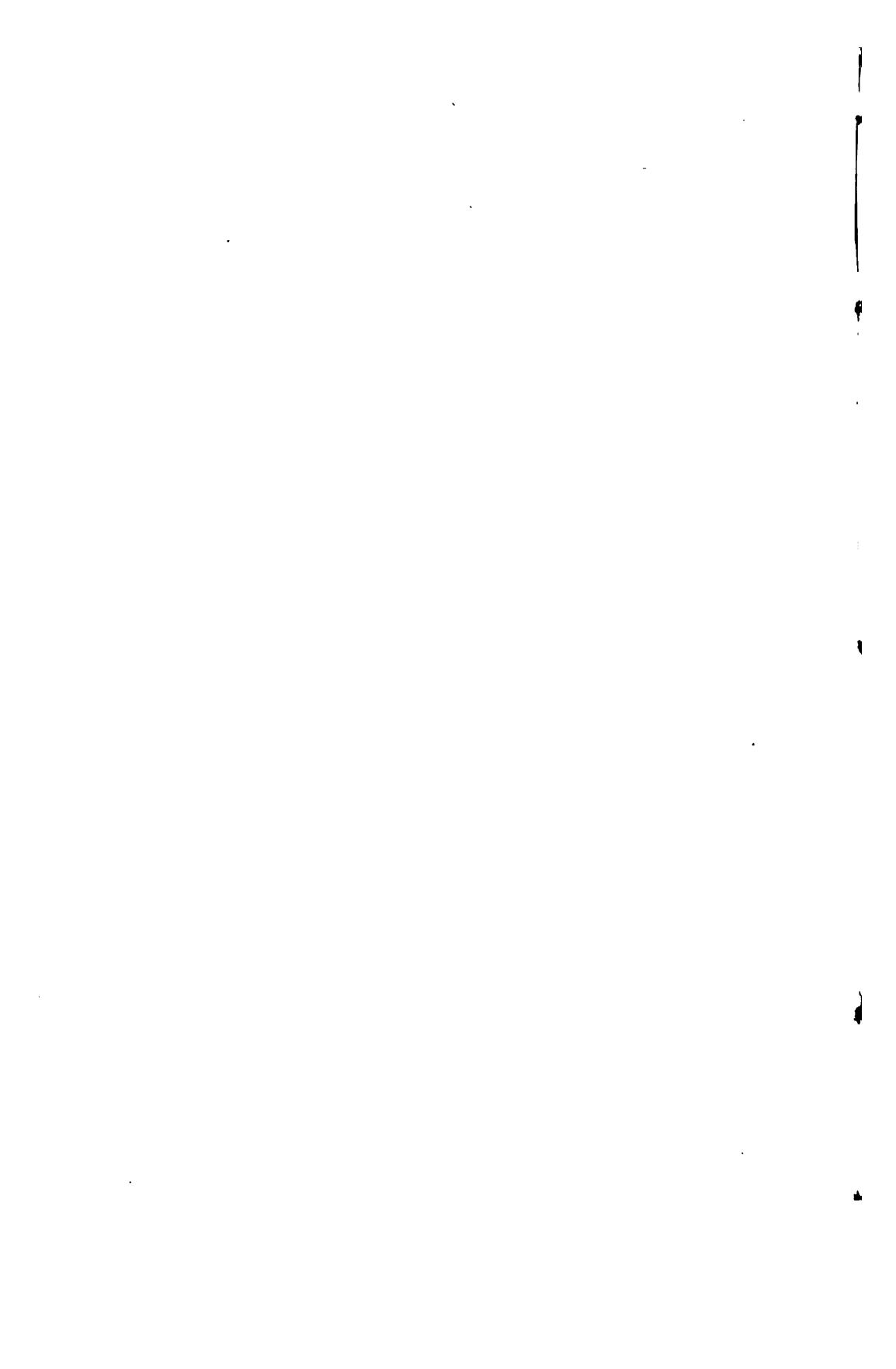
THREE PHASES
OF
CHRISTIAN LOVE

BY *Mary Eliza. H.*
LADY HERBERT.



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LIVES OF

(1)

ST. MONICA.

(2)

**MLLE. VICTORINE DE GALARD
TERRAUBE.**

(3)

VENERABLE MERE DEVOS.

LONDON

PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.

NEW-STREET SQUARE



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Translator's Preface.

THE following biographies are derived from three lives, each and all remarkable for the important lessons they give to the times in which we live. They are the "Histoire de St. Monique," by M. L'Abbé Bougaud, Vicar-General of Orleans; the "Life of Mademoiselle Victorine de Galard Terraube;" and the "Life of La Vénérée Mère Dévos," Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul.

With regard to the first, it is so admirable both in feeling and expression, that I advise anyone acquainted with the French language not to read it in my translation, but to enjoy it, without a moment's delay, in the original. If I have had the courage to persevere in giving to the English public this imperfect version of so beautiful a

work, it has been from a feeling of gratitude for the kindness and courtesy of the venerable author who empowered me to do so; and from the earnest desire which every mother must feel to make the name of "St. Monica" a household word in England, as it has already become, through his means, in France.

The authors of the other two lives are unknown to me. I can only hope they will excuse the free use I have made of the materials they have put within my reach; and will accept my earnest desire to spread the knowledge of such characters as these among my countrywomen, through the medium of their own language, as an apology for the apparent piracy of which I have been guilty.

MARY ELIZABETH HERBERT.

WILTON HOUSE:
Sept. 1866.

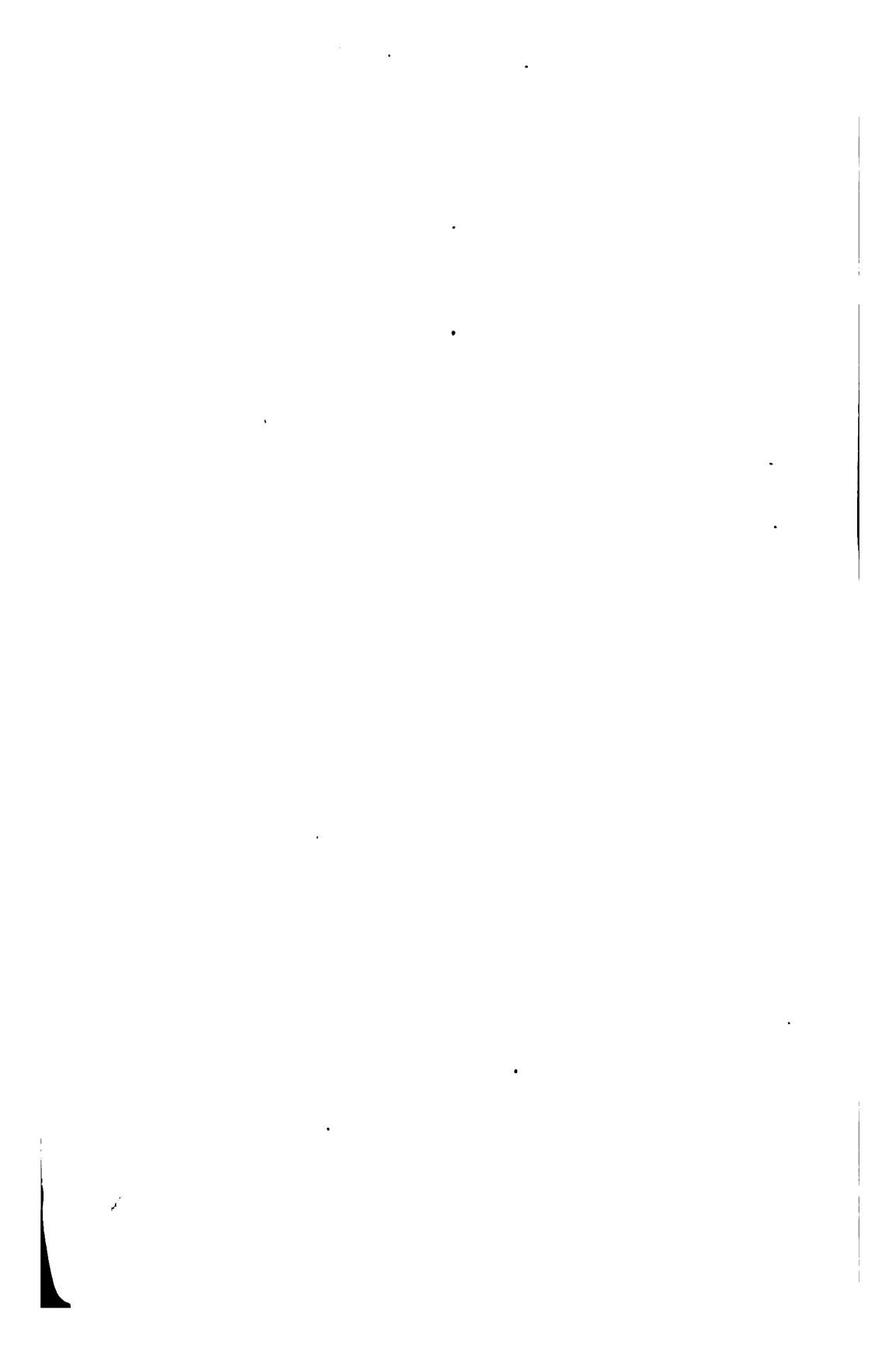




THE LIFE
OF
ST. MONICA

THE MOTHER OF ST. AUGUSTINE.





TO ONE WHO BEARS THE NAME OF

‘Monica’

AND WHO HAS SHOWN

IN THE MIDST OF GREAT AND VARIED TRIALS

A COURAGE, PATIENCE, AND FIDELITY

WORTHY OF THAT GREAT SAINT,

THIS TRANSLATION OF HER LIFE

IS

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.





Introduction.



BIOGRAPHY like this which we are about to present to our readers should not be written. It should be sung, for it is a poem. It is the history of the most beautiful and the purest love that has ever existed; the tenderest and at the same time the strongest; passing through twenty-five years of trial and of fear, without faltering for an instant in its course; becoming only the more ardent as difficulties increase; and finally ending in a flood of triumph and of ecstasy, of glory and of joy.

Look at Ary Schéffer's picture of St. Monica and her Son, sitting in the window at Ostia, overlooking the sea. It is of that mother we would write, to console the anxious, fearful mothers of these days, and to reveal to them

the enormous power God has put into their hands for the safety of their children.

Leibnitz writes, "The world would be reformed if we could reform its education." We say, "That the world would be reformed if we could transform the mothers;" that is, if we could make them see the source of their strength, and could induce them perseveringly to push that strength to its extreme limits, in order to save the souls of their children. We would say to them all, "What do you fear? Your sons will be what you make them—good, noble, generous, unselfish, fearing God—if you yourselves implant those feelings in their hearts, and confirm them by your own example." There are many perils and difficulties which a mother cannot foresee, cannot avert. There are none that she cannot overcome in the end, if she will make use of the means God has given her; if she will only *will* their salvation, "*will*" it with all the powers of her soul and spirit, and offer up her whole life for that end.

The Comte de Maistre, writing one day to his daughter Constance, who was complaining of the position of women in society, and wishing that they could all become authoresses, says: "You are mistaken, my child, as to the true

power and mission of women. Women, it is true, have neither written the 'Iliad' nor the 'Odyssey,' nor 'Jerusalem Delivered,' nor 'Athalia,' but they have created far greater marvels than these. It is by them and on their knees that what is most excellent in the world is formed and perfected. Do you think," he added, smiling, "that I should have been as grateful to your mother for writing a clever novel as for giving me your brother? And when I say that, I do not mean merely bringing him into the world, and putting him into his cradle, but forming his heart and mind to be what he is. The true mission of a woman is in her home, to make her husband happy, and to bring up his children; that is, to *create great men*. That is the 'second birth,' which has not been cursed like the first!"

Doubtless, if the mother's life be absorbed in frivolity and pleasure, the child's will bear the same stamp; but we do not speak of mothers like these.

Look at St. Bernard, where did he learn his purity, his faith, his burning love of God? from his holy mother Aleth. To whom did St. Symphorian owe the heroism of his life and of his death but to his mother Augusta? And St.

John Chrysostom, and St. Athanasius, and St. Ambrose, and St. Gregory the Great ; and, later still, St. Louis, St. Edward, St. Francois d'Assisi, St. Francois de Sales, St. Theresa ? The time would fail us to enumerate the names of all the heroes and saints trained by their mothers for their great and noble destinies. Well might Horace exclaim, “*Fortes creatur fortibus et bonis;*” and again, we read in Holy Scripture, “*Generatio rectorum benedicetur.*”

But to act thus on the hearts and minds of their children, mothers must suffer, must weep and pray, must offer the sacrifice of their very lives, if need be, to snatch them from evil and draw them to God. The real Christian mother, who would sooner see her son die than stained with mortal sin, has given to the world, in all ages, an example before which Pagan heroines fade into insignificance. See the mother of the holy twins of Langres kissing the chains of her three little children in the prison, and exhorting them to die with courage for their faith ; or St. Symphorosa, trembling lest her boy of sixteen should shrink under the torture, running before him crying out, “*My son ! they cannot take your life. They can only exchange it for a better !*” Or again, St. Denise, seeing her beautiful child

expiring under the lash, yet sustaining him by her courage, her voice, and her look to the last ! Does it not seem impossible to fathom agonies like those of Smyphorosa, Felicita, and others, who saw their children die inch by inch under the cruelty of their tormentors, and yet never flinched from the untold martyrdom, and could even rejoice in the triumphs of their faith ? It is rarely, indeed, in these days that mothers have to go through sufferings of this kind ; but their mission is not the less arduous or important. The storms of heresy and unbelief are rising up on all sides to turn their sons from their childhood's faith. The luxury and self-indulgence of the age are for ever causing them to drift into the current of impurity and vice with which they are surrounded. What shall be their anchor and their stay ? What but the mother's ever watchful love and warning voice ? And should these efforts fail, from unavoidable separation or other causes, she has still one all-powerful arm—her tears before God. Read in Holy Scripture how these were answered. Look at Hagar, in the Old Testament, and in the New, at the Canaanitish woman and the widow of Nain. Why were these miracles multiplied by our Lord ? but to prove to mothers the august power He has placed in their hands ; and to teach

them, whatever may be the wanderings or youthful follies of their sons, how, by dint of sufferings and sacrifices and prayers, they may bring them back to God. If, in the seventeenth century, St. François de Sales sustained, strengthened, and consoled a host of Christian mothers by the example of St. Monica, why should not a similar example produce its fruits in the nineteenth? Are the dangers less pressing? are not the needs as great? Perhaps there never was a moment when wives and mothers, if worthy of the name, were called upon to bear such deep sorrows. Let them then read the history of St. Monica. Let them learn from this model of wives and mothers to pray and to weep like her, to hope to the end, never to be discouraged, and to believe that if the young men of the present day yield to their terrible temptations, it is because there are not enough tears and prayers in the hearts of their wives and mothers ascending daily and hourly before the throne of God.





Life of St. Monica.

CHAPTER I.

“Lisez l’Histoire de Sainte Monique. Vous y verrez le soin qu’elle eut de son Augustin et plusieurs choses qui vous consoleront.”

(Lettre de St. François de Sales à Madame de Chantal.)



THE road from the ruins of Carthage to those of Hippone, passing by the ancient Sicca Veneria, traverses one of the most beautiful countries in the earth. From the earliest times it was famed for its fertility; and in these days, although for twelve centuries wasted and desolate, French occupation has restored its pristine beauty, and vineyards and olive groves, and oranges and citrons have sprung up as by a miracle from that desert soil: while fragments of statues, broken columns, ruined amphitheatres (all, in fact, vestiges of the finest era of Roman art), crop out here and there amidst this luxuriant vegetation.

About the middle of this road, at a little distance from the famous battle-field of Zama, on the slope of a mountain feathered at its base by olive trees, is a little village called by the Arabs *Souk Arras*. Its small white houses are built on the site of an ancient Roman city called Tagaste, of which the ruins, half-buried in the sand, peep out here and there amid clusters of aloes, acanthus, and prickly pear. The plain below is intersected by different small streams, all flowing into the Medjirda, the ancient Bagradas of the Romans. Beyond, to the north, stretches the desert, which is divided from the fertile plains by a belt of evergreen oak ; and to the south is the sea, with its boundless horizon rarely broken by the passing sails.

It was on this mountain-side, in the year 332, that a lady named Faonda gave birth to a little girl, during a time of danger and difficulty, which in that era of revolution overwhelmed so many of the noblest Roman families. She and her husband had remained Catholics when their native town had fallen almost universally into the Donatist heresy, and this circumstance added to the isolation from their family and friends, which political convulsions had caused. Little else is known of their previous lives ; but at the time of their babe's birth, who received at the baptismal font the name of Monica, they appear to have

been in straitened circumstances for their position in life, with numerous servants, but small means to keep up appearances. The little Monica was thus early inured to privations of various kinds ; and to this training she probably owed that just appreciation of the value of earthly possessions, and that longing for a heavenly inheritance, which became in after life her marked characteristics. The year of her birth was signalised by being likewise that of St. Jerome, who first saw the light at Stridon in Dalmatia. St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St. Basil, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Hilary of Poictiers, St. Martin of Tours, and a host of other saints, were preparing in different parts of the Christian world for the fight which each was to wage for the faith, and under the banner of their Lord. The Church was rising from the catacombs, and St. Sylvester on the papal throne, and St. Athanasius in the episcopal see of Alexandria, were nobly maintaining their ground against the heresies of the day. In speaking of her early education, St. Monica often dwelt not only on her mother's tender care, but on that of an old servant who had been her father's nurse. This admirable woman, held in the most affectionate veneration by the child whom she had reared, and at whose marriage she had assisted, lived her life over again, as it were, in the care and nurture of

this his greatest earthly treasure, and guarded the cradle with a vigilance which such faithful love alone could show. Thus tenderly watched and preserved from harm, the child grew rapidly in the knowledge of all that was "lovely and of good report." She was still quite a little thing, when she would steal away to the church, and there, in an angle of the wall, kneeling, with her hands clasped and her eyes modestly cast down, she would forget the time in her intercourse with God. Sometimes, on her returning late and alone, her nurse would scold, and even beat her; but she bore it all patiently, nor did this severe treatment ever diminish her affection for one whom she always called her "second mother." Often, when at play with her companions, she would disappear, and be found by them under a tree, so absorbed in meditation that she had forgotten all about the game; and on other occasions she would rise in the night, secretly, to repeat the prayers her mother had taught her. Another strong inclination soon showed itself in the little Monica, and that was her love for the poor. She used to hide in her pinafore any little delicacy given to her, and then secretly look out for some poor child at the door on whom she could bestow it. Travellers and sick were the especial objects of her pity. When the former arrived under her father's

hospitable roof she would plead for and obtain permission to wash their feet, according to the fashion of those times ; while to the sick and suffering she would render every service in the power of a child so young and feeble. Her gentleness and sweet temper were always most remarkable. She was the very spirit of peace ; and in the little quarrels of her companions, her very presence would put a stop to them. There was something in her calm loving look which, without her knowing it, influenced everyone who came near her.

To the natural gifts given her by God was added what we should consider the almost over-severe discipline of her nurse. Except at the hours when she was accustomed to share her parents' meals, she was never allowed to drink even a drop of water, though she might be dying of thirst. It was her nurse's idea, to accustom her in this way to penance and self-denial, and especially to cultivate in her charge that spirit of self-sacrifice so necessary to a Christian in whatever position of life. Yet little faults sometimes dimmed the bright character of this fair child ; and St. Augustine, who loved to trace in his mother's early life every indication of the ways by which God had moulded her to the perfection which she at last attained, relates the story as follows. She used to be sent to draw wine for

the pilgrims and others who came to her father's house, and in doing so acquired the habit of sipping a little from each glass, more from childish fun than anything else; but by degrees she got to take more and more. This was perceived by a young servant who accompanied her to the cellar, and who afterwards, in a fit of passion, retorted on her mistress for something she had said, by calling her a "Wine-bibber." Stung with remorse, and with a sudden perception of her fault, Monica severely corrected herself for it, and ever after refused to drink anything but water. This venial sin in reality brought about the happiest results in the formation of her character. It made her humble and diffident of herself, and gave her that taste for mortification and self-denial which prepared her to meet courageously the many trials and sufferings of her after life.

About this time (that is, in 348-9) Monica had the joy of seeing her native town entirely delivered from the yoke of heresy, and restored to Catholic unity. She was then sixteen, and had just made her first Communion. To great natural gifts and personal beauty were added a modesty which charmed all who came in contact with her. Her parents wished to give her the rich apparel suitable to her rank, but she invariably refused all such presents, contenting herself with the simple white robe, without

trimmings or other ornaments, worn by young Christians in those days, and of which we see so many paintings in the catacombs.

Thus passed the early years of our saint, when the time came for her settlement in life; and this pure and holy child, by the inscrutable decrees of Providence, was given in marriage to a man in no way worthy of her, a Pagan, of noble birth indeed, but small means, of violent temper and dissolute habits, and for whom she is said to have entertained a positive repugnance. Who can fathom the reasons which induced her parents to bring about a union fraught with such unhappiness and danger to their daughter? It resembled the old punishment of the heathens, who used to fasten a living to a dead body and shut them both up in one room! It is impossible to understand their motives, except on the supposition that God overruled their judgment in order to purify by suffering the body and soul of her who was to be the mother of so great a saint.

Be that as it may, it is certain that after a time Monica accepted the hand of Patricius, believing that by this heroic sacrifice she could thereby save a soul; and after many prayers, not one of which was offered in vain, she plighted her troth at the altar with a calm dignity and a tender modesty which touched even to tears all those who took part in the ceremony.

Nothing is sadder than an ill-assorted union. Every day some illusion is dispelled. One by one, cherished dreams and hopes of happiness must be given up, or drop like autumn leaves; differences of character and of temper combine to tear away the veil from the hard and cruel reality; and with this awakening comes the hopeless feeling that the tie is eternal. Surely, were it not for the grace of God, many a heart would sink at once in utter discouragement and despair.

St. Monica had hitherto always lived in a Christian home. She did not even guess at the miseries of a family in which God did not preside, and where passions, unrestrained by principle, make a very hell upon earth. Her mother-in-law was still alive, and, as if to make her position the more insupportable, Monica was compelled to live with her. A Pagan like her son, she resembled him also in character; violent, imperious, and bitter, she added to these qualities a jealousy which knew no bounds. The servants were on a par with their masters. Not daring to treat their young mistress with personal violence, they revenged themselves on her by the vilest calumnies; and, to curry favour with the mother, did not scruple to malign in every possible way the character of her daughter-in-law. In this cruel position, what could a

girl of two-and-twenty do but throw herself on the tenderness and protection of her husband? Unfortunately, however, poor Monica had not even that consolation. Patricius could not understand either her wishes or her way of life. Her prayers bored, her alms enraged him. That she should wish to visit the sick and poor; that she should love the slaves, and care to alleviate their sufferings; all this was to him perfectly incomprehensible. At every turn our saint met with the contradictions so well described by Tertullian, in speaking of mixed marriages at that time. "How," he exclaims, "is it possible for a Christian woman to serve God when tied to a man who does not worship Him? If she wants to go to church, he will fix that hour to meet her at the baths; if she ought to fast, he will order a feast for that very day; if she wishes to go out, the servants will be too busy. Will such a husband ever suffer his wife to visit the indigent? to rise at midnight for the holy offices of Christmas or Easter? to kneel at the altar held in abhorrence by the Pagans? to wash the feet of the saints, and kiss the chains of the martyrs? If she should wish to feed the hungry, to cheer the pilgrim, barns and cellars and all will be closed to her prayers!"

This was the life to which St. Monica had been condemned. This was her daily suffering.

But even to this she could have resigned herself, had not her purity and modesty been likewise so continually assailed. In her complete innocence during the first days of her marriage, she was almost unable to comprehend the full horror of her position. But when she had fully realised it, even then her noble courage did not desert her. She understood as at a glance the mission which God had given her; and, instead of leaving her husband's roof (as another noble Roman lady had done, named Gabiola, married to a man of equally bad character), she resolved at once to devote her whole life to his reformation and conversion. And to this end, she employed neither words nor discussions, still less reproaches.* Instead of preaching virtue, she practised it. She tried to become more and more gentle, humble, patient, and devoted; feeling sure that the day would come when Patricius would yield to a persuasion so touching and so true. But for this, both time and heroic virtue were needed. She resolved to try both. She could not be blind to the weaknesses and infidelities of her husband; but she never uttered a word. She suffered in silence. Now and then in his absence her tears would flow, in spite of herself; but,

* St. Augustine, speaking of this, says, "Sicut eum lucrari tibi, loquens te illi moribus suis, quibus eam pulchram faciebus et reverenter amabilem atque mirabilem viro."—*Confess.* lib. ix. cap. ix.

knowing what folly it was to expect that a man would love a woman faithfully who had not the love of God, she prayed above all things for the gift of faith for her husband, and for that Divine love which can alone inspire chastity into the heart of man. She showed the same discretion, prudence, and sweetness when he abandoned himself to the fury of his ungovernable passion. What was to be done with a man beside himself with rage? She waited till the fit was over; and then, seizing her opportunity when they were alone, and when men, however violent, have a return of compunction and a wish to make amends to those who have suffered from their fury, she would, with great gentleness and delicacy, point out to him the folly of his conduct, mingling her tender reproaches with a word or two of advice or explanation, which were almost invariably well received. This method she often recommended to her young friends, who, with bruised and swollen faces, in consequence of the violence of their husbands in those brutal times, used to come and pour out their complaints to her. "It is the consequence of your tongues," she would say with a smile. And they saw she was right; for, although her husband was more passionate than all the others, yet he never struck her; her gentle look always restrained him.

By degrees this admirable conduct produced

on him a marked effect. The love which he had always felt for her was heightened by respect and admiration ; and thus the foundation was laid for that wonderful conversion which she had yet to earn by years of bitter sacrifices, and often apparently fruitless tears. But Monica had learnt at the foot of the Crucifix that absolute trust in God which nothing could discourage, and which was the secret of her strength.

It was in the midst of trials like these that God sent her that greatest of all human consolations, a mother's joy. It was on the 13th November 354 that she gave birth to her first boy, so famous in all future ages under the name of St. Augustine. It is said that even before his birth, a revelation had been granted to her of the great works he was to accomplish for the Church of God. Her second boy was named Navigius, a timid, gentle, and pious but sickly child, living a quiet hidden life of prayer and devotion to his mother, and who became later the father of St. Augustine's favourite nephew Patricio, deacon of his church, and of two girls, who both became spouses of Jesus Christ. After these two sons, whom, as St. Augustine magnificently expresses it, "she conceived in her womb for a temporal life, and in her heart for an eternal one," Monica had a little girl, to whom she gave the name of "Perpetua," which was that of the Martyr Saint

of Carthage. Of her history, unfortunately, little is known, but that she was brought up by her mother in every good and pious sentiment; that she married, then became a widow, and being without children, went and kept her brother Augustine's house until the day of his ordination. After that, he would have no woman under his roof, not even his sister. She then devoted herself to a religious life, and became superior of one of the convents founded by St. Augustine. From the cradle to the grave, her life was so holy that the great Doctor always gave her the name of "The Saint."

Such was Monica's family. In vain is the father a Pagan—in vain do the mother-in-law and the servants combine to make all Christian education impossible—her children, one and all, become saints; as if God wished to prove to us what a real mother can do, alone and unaided, and what a blessing it is for children to have been conceived in a heart absorbed like Monica's in the love of God.

All mothers love their children, but to those whom an unhappy marriage has embittered, this love has a keenness, a vigilance, and an intensity unknown almost to those whose lives have been brightened by mutual conjugal affection. Such was Monica's devotion. Even before her boy's birth she had consecrated him with all the ardour

of her soul to God, so that, as St. François de Sales remarks, “ St. Augustin avait déjà goûte le sel de Dieu dès le sein de sa mère.” It is very beautiful to see how in every page of St. Augustine’s “Confessions” the expression occurs, “Ab utero matris meæ.” If any spark of good, if any love for Jesus Christ, if any horror of evil remained in his heart during those wild and sinful years of his life, he attributed each good or holy impulse to that one source—his mother’s holiness and prayers from the first moment of her conception. No sooner was he born, than Monica had him carried to church; and as infant baptism was then rare and exceptional, and contrary to the established usage, she insisted that he should, at any rate, be inscribed in the number of catechumens, that is, among those who aspired to Holy Baptism; and the cross was marked on his forehead of Him under whose banner hereafter he was to be so valiant a soldier.

There was no fear that a mother of this sort would entrust to others the nursing of her child, and it was from the pure breast of Monica that St. Augustine drew both his human and divine nourishment. As he grew older, she felt more and more the awful responsibility of her charge, and the special importance in his particular case of awakening in his heart that tenderness of conscience which would be his only safeguard in the

midst of the perilous examples with which his father would surround his youth. To inspire him with the great principles of her faith, with a contempt for the perishable and fleeting pleasures of the world, and with a longing for the eternal and invisible, was her constant aim. We know how well she succeeded. That delicacy of feeling, that hungering after something he could not find, even in his worst days, that sublime cry when the hour of his conversion came, "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, O my God, and our hearts find no rest save in Thee,"—all this was the fruit of her early teaching. But she added a second and even more powerful incentive; she spoke to him incessantly of the love of God, as shown in His sacred infancy, and in His awful death on the cross; in the might and power and incredible vastness of that love; and then drew from it lessons of gratitude and generosity in the service of such a Master, which made a profound impression on the naturally noble heart of her child. Then, to put a finishing touch to her teaching, she strove to inspire him with a horror of everything that was degrading and dishonourable; and these feelings became so deeply ingrained in his nature, that no subsequent follies or excesses could efface them. In a word, she had planted a *conscience* in his heart which never allowed him peace

or rest till he found both in the bosom of his God.

A little anecdote of his childhood is recorded in his "Confessions" as a proof of the profound impression made upon him by his mother's faith in spite of his father's Paganism, and also gives us a little insight into the difficulties of Monica's position. "I was still a child," writes St. Augustine, "when I was one day seized with a violent pain in the stomach. I felt choking, and every one thought I was going to die. Feeling myself in danger, I had but one wish, and that was to receive baptism. With the liveliest faith I implored it of my mother, of the Church, of every one. I conjured them to hasten it. My mother was overwhelmed with fear, less for my body than for my soul. She flew to obtain for me this great grace. She pleaded for it with cries and tears." Strangely enough, God, as if satisfied with this ardent desire in the heart of both the mother and the son, suddenly removed the danger. The child got well, and the father, whom terror at the prospect of losing his boy had persuaded to allow the rite, now refused his consent; so that the baptism was delayed for twenty years. Monica submitted; in fact, she knew it was useless to insist; and as the Church tolerated the delay, she resigned herself to it in silence; only she redoubled her

vigilant care over the soul of her boy ; and that, if possible, no hostile influences might be brought to bear on his education, she used almost super-human efforts to soften the hearts of the uncongenial inmates of her home. Her mother-in-law was the first to yield to this loving stratagem. Her prejudices by degrees disappeared before the unalterable patience, sweetness, and respectful attentions of her daughter-in-law. "She recognised," says St. Augustine, "the falsehood of the calumnies set on foot by the servants, and exposed them to Patricius, who caused them, in consequence, to be severely chastised. After this punishment, the old lady publicly announced that whoever dared come to her with stories against her daughter-in-law would obtain a like recompense. From that moment not a word was said, and St. Monica lived ever after on most affectionate terms with her mother-in-law, no cloud ever arising to mar the understanding established between them."

The servants had held their tongues from fear ; Monica determined to win them by love. She gained all their hearts, and saw herself ever after served with a fidelity and tenderness which her forbearing charity had justly earned.

And it was not only in her own family that this holy influence made itself felt. She became the consoler and the peacemaker of the whole neigh-

bourhood. Everyone came to tell her their troubles. She listened to each with a patience and a loving gentleness which nothing ever seemed to ruffle, maintaining the most inviolable silence as to the secrets confided to her, and always contriving to say the right word at the right season. If she ever repeated the conversation of one person to another, it was to heal a wound and to allay a bitter or angry thought, so as to bring about a loving understanding between them. As she had been as a child, so she became as a woman, the angel of peace and the minister of consolation to all that suffered. But dearer to her heart than all else was the conversion of her husband. He was a Pagan—she must bring him to God; he was a father—she must associate him in her work for her children. St. Augustine, speaking of this time, says: “I myself had then the gift of faith; so had everyone in the house except my father. But he was never able to weaken in my mind the influence of my mother, which was so overpowering, from the force of her example, that he could not succeed in turning me away from a firm belief in the Saviour whom he ignored.” And thus will it ever be between a believing mother and an unbeliefing father; a child will never hesitate—he will follow his mother. May this thought give consolation to some hearts!

To attain her great end, Monica redoubled her attentions to her husband's wants and wishes, anticipating them, if possible, with a delicacy and minuteness which left him nothing to desire. Far cleverer and more gifted than himself, she strove to abase herself for him to the position of a servant, and if the sacrifices which her humility entailed on her were sometimes painful, she consoled herself by the greater liberty he, by degrees, allowed her with regard to the training of her boy. But with respect to their child, fresh trials and difficulties soon arose for our saint. It was necessary to think of his education, and he was entrusted to the care of the ablest masters in Tagaste. One would have imagined that a genius like his would at once have developed itself, and that in this respect, at any rate, she would have nothing but satisfaction. It was quite the reverse. The little Augustine was intolerably idle and naughty. Learning to read and write, repeating over and over again, "one and one make two, two and two make four," seemed to him perfectly insupportable. His disgust at every kind of teaching seemed to increase day by day. His masters tried by threats and punishments to force him to work. But these only had the effect of making him deceitful, while they redoubled his hatred of his lessons.

Monica, feeling that fear was not the proper

incentive to a boy of his temperament, took him to some holy and saintlike priests, men of prayer, "Homines rogantes Te," as St. Augustine has it, so as to inspire him with a higher motive for overcoming his repugnance to his studies. "I learnt from them," says St. Augustine, "that God was a being who would really come and help us in our need, and I prayed with my whole heart, child as I was, that He would help me and prevent my being so often whipped at school. I must own that my prayers were not always answered, and my father used to laugh at my floggings, which were a joke to him, but to me a source of continual pain and terror." Unfortunately, idleness was not Augustine's only fault. He added to it great pride, a passion for human praise, and an excessive love of every kind of gambling and questionable pleasure. The Pagan blood of his father seemed to boil in his veins, and threatened to overwhelm the Christian instincts implanted in him by his mother. It was at this very perilous moment, and at what seemed the turning-point in his life, that Monica found herself compelled to separate for the first time from her son. Tagaste was a small place, and offered few advantages for education. Augustine, in spite of his faults, showed signs already of that brilliant genius, that quickness of perception, and that vivid imagination which,

later, were to make him the wonder of his age, so Patricius resolved to make every sacrifice in order to give him a higher course of instruction. About six miles from Tagaste there was a city called by Ptolemy *Madaura*, famous for its schools, its intellectual culture, and its historical traditions. Its fine forum, enriched by statues of the gods, was surrounded by colleges. Here Patricius determined in the first instance to send his son, and here, accordingly, St. Monica left him, with the wise and loving counsels which mothers ever pour into their boys' hearts under similar circumstances, and without foreseeing the terrible havoc which sin and self-indulgence were soon to make in her child's soul. St. Augustine was then thirteen or fourteen. It was in 367. The intelligence of the boy had begun to develop itself: his dislike to study vanished; Virgil, Homer, Cicero, and Ovid seemed to open a new world to him. Virgil especially produced upon him an extraordinary impression; he could not read of the sorrows of Dido without profound emotion. It was the custom of the school for the students to represent different scenes from Virgil and other classical poets, in prose, and the prize was awarded to the one who best awakened the passions of love, anger, or hatred in the spectators. St. Augustine excelled in this; he threw his whole soul into his acting, and not content

with following the instructions of his masters, he frequented the theatres in order to learn the secret of passions which as yet he scarcely understood. The fatal poison once introduced, rapidly bore its pernicious fruits, and Augustine at fifteen was already deeply plunged in criminal pleasures which his natural reserve enabled him to conceal from the knowledge of others, but which had the effect of utterly destroying the purity of his soul.

Patricius, enchanted with his son's successes, which in eloquence and rhetoric became every day more remarkable, resolved to make a still further sacrifice in order to send him to Carthage, where the famous library, and great competition of the university, promised to put the finishing touches to his genius ; but to accomplish this, great economy and many privations for some time were necessary ; so that towards the end of the year 369 Patricius brought his son home for a twelvemonth, that they might collect the money absolutely required for so long and expensive a journey. The joy of Monica at having her boy back again under her roof may be easily imagined. She knew nothing of the fatal change that had passed over him. He was most careful to conceal the passions which had begun to take entire possession of his heart, and she only saw him, his indolence overcome, the idol of both masters and

companions, who vied with one another in extolling his genius, and felt happy and proud (as what mother would not?) at the triumphs of her boy. If Augustine had had the courage to own his state of mind to his mother the evil might have been averted; but as it was, the enforced idleness to which he found himself condemned, only gave the reins to his imagination, and kindled the flame which already smouldered in his heart. "I had but one dream at this time," says St. Augustine, "to love, and be loved." In the midst of it all, however, he was not happy. Sometimes his eyes would be opened to the depths of the precipice on which he was standing, and he would pray for chastity and purity; but an inward feeling made him add, "Not yet, not yet." It was impossible to conceive a more perilous position for a young man endued with such marvellous sensibility, whose passions had been fostered by bad books and bad examples, whose father was indifferent to all religion or morality provided his son became a proficient in his studies; and who was deprived of all the religious helps so necessary to preserve innocence and tenderness of conscience in one on the verge of manhood. Yet Monica's work was not quite destroyed; the seed planted by God, and watered by a mother's tears, may remain dormant for years; the floods of passion and of sin may

pass over it, but the day will come when it will revive again and put forth leaves, and bring forth fruit a hundredfold.

As if to prepare and console Monica for the terrible revelation which was soon to come upon her of her son's profligacy, Patricius at this very time began to show the first signs of an inclination to become a Christian. They had been married for seventeen years, and never during that time had Monica relaxed in her efforts insensibly to convert him. She had spoken little, never preached, loved much, and prayed always. Patricius, whose pride was for a long time enlisted on the side of not yielding to the secret influence of his wife, at last announced to her his intention of abjuring Paganism, and asking to be admitted into the rank of catechumens. Monica's joy may be imagined. It was at the beginning of Lent, when Patricius, kneeling at the foot of the altar, received from the bishop the imposition of hands, on his forehead the cross, and on his lips the sacred salt (symbol of that incorruption of heart which the Christian was to keep evermore), which was the ceremony then used by the Christian Church for those about to enter on its novitiate. Had Patricius, after making up his mind to this first step, gone on to the second, and consented to receive at Easter the waters of baptism, Monica's happiness would have been complete.

But he had not arrived at that stage. Each age has its perils and its temptations. In this fourth century, many men caused themselves to be inscribed on the lists of the Church as catechumens, who refused to do more, either from false shame or because baptism would have constrained them to a life of greater purity and stricter practice ; so that often it was delayed till the hour of death. In vain the bishops and fathers of the Church preached against this abuse. It existed for a long time ; and Patricius fell into this snare of indifference, and was contented to remain at the portal of the Church for many years, until the prayers and tears of his wife brought him at last into the actual fold of Christ. Still, it was a step gained. At least he was no longer a Pagan ; he believed in God. Although Monica had not yet the joy of seeing him kneel by her side at the holy table, he went with her to church ; he assisted at the first part of the prayers ; and she could see, as in a vision, the ultimate fulfilment of her hopes in that union of heart and soul in a common faith, without which marriage can be but a name.

While dwelling on these scenes in St. Monica's life, our thoughts naturally revert to our own age and time. Which of us has not seen a young girl, pure and good, give her hand to one, either indifferent to all religion, or else perhaps hardened

in evil, and has not trembled for the result? Five, ten years pass, and then the first step is taken. The man begins to pray. A little longer, and he is seen once more, with his wife, treading the church path by which his mother as a child had led him. Rarely indeed does his indifference outlive this gentle, loving influence. Ah! let no young girl forget the sublime part which God has assigned to her. Let her remember that to wield an angel's power she must have an angel's patience, fidelity, delicacy, tender and vigilant love, gentle silence, continual prayer. "*The rôle of a Christian wife*," says a charming writer, "resembles that of a guardian angel. She may lead the world, but by remaining, like him, invisible."

What impression was made on St. Augustine by his father's conversion is not known, but it did not have any effect in arresting the course of his passions. Monica, believing him still innocent and still a child, was feeling altogether happier than she had been throughout her troubled married life, when an accident revealed to her the danger of her boy. Patricius had taken him to a party. What happened there it is not necessary to relate; but on his return he told everything to his wife, with a half-smile at the prospect of being a grandfather. But the very first word that he let slip filled Monica with

unspeakable terror and dismay. Her boy was, then, become a man, with a man's passions ; his innocence was gone ! She sought her son, and with the utmost delicacy, yet with an emotion she could not altogether control, she tried to set before him the loathsomeness of vice, the peace and joy of a pure heart, and the horror which sins of this nature should inspire in the heart of a Christian. But her words had ceased to have the power of touching him. As he did not know how to answer her, he began to avoid her : he could not stand her earnest, anxious look. In order to get out of her way, he spent whole days in hunting or in vile and unworthy pleasures. Plunged in a society more dissolute than himself, he took a pride in imitating them, and in pretending to be worse than he really was, from a kind of false shame and fear of ridicule but too common at that age.

Monica watched his gradual downfall with a sorrow which none but mothers know. Once she braved her natural repugnance to speak on the subject, and conjured him if he had no respect for himself or for her, at any rate to have some regard to the peace, and honour, and happiness of other families. But he had already begun to despise her words. This is what he himself says of his state of mind at that time : " My mother's words appeared to me only those of a woman who

knew nothing of the world ; and I should have blushed to have been led by them. Thus I despised her gentle warnings, or rather I despised God, who was speaking to me through her." This last effort tore away the veil which had till then blinded poor Monica's eyes to the real state of things, and for the first time she felt the full anguish of a mother's sorrow. What bitter tears, what earnest prayers did she not offer up to God that He might protect and save the child whom her loving care was now powerless to shield from harm !

Yet, speaking of this time twenty-five years after, St. Augustine thought she had not done enough. " My mother was not sufficiently severe with me," he said. " She should have compelled me to give up my bad companions, and live quietly with her in the sanctity of our family life. As it was, she trusted to my studies raising me from the mire in which I was plunged, and so, unrestrained by any wholesome discipline or coercion, I gave free play to my vicious inclinations." Yet, in these days, we see mothers altogether shutting their eyes to their boys' vices, palliating and excusing them, as " wild oats which must be sown," instead of vigorously exercising all the influence and powers which God has given them to arrest the evil and save them from a lifelong repentance.

Monica's one hope now was to get him away from Tagaste, with its pernicious idleness and evil influences; and yet she dreaded sending him alone to a city as corrupt as Carthage. Patricius, however, insisted. The money necessary for his journey and for the prosecution of his studies had been raised, and so, towards the end of the year 370, St. Monica took him herself to place him in the college, and left him with loving counsels indeed, but with more anxious fears than she had ever yet known.

Carthage was, at that time, one of the first cities in the empire, yielding in importance neither to Antioch nor Alexandria. With a fine port, recently fortified by Augustus, handsome quays, fine broad streets watered by fountains, magnificent temples and theatres, and markets in which were displayed all the richest stuffs and produce of the East, Carthage likewise rivalled Rome in education and the fine arts. Its university was thronged with students from every part of the empire. The schools were distinguished by long white banners floating over the doors; and there were classes for rhetoric, philosophy, grammar, languages, and every conceivable science. The students themselves, though often remarkable for brilliant talents and abilities, had the reputation of great license in manners and customs, so much so, that they received

the nickname of “*Eversores*” (or upsetters of everything). Their studies being over in the morning, they crowded in the afternoon to the circus, where combats of gladiators and wild beasts still further excited their ardent natures, so that nightly rows were the consequence.

This was the atmosphere into which St. Augustine was introduced, with his vivid imagination, his hot passions, and his impatience of control. His first appearance in the schools made a great sensation. He was already master of several languages, had a singular aptitude for philosophy and metaphysics, a passion for study, a fine taste for poetry and painting, and all that was most beautiful in nature or in art; above all, a wonderful eloquence, which electrified his hearers. The most brilliant future was, consequently, prophesied for him in the schools; and he became as much the idol of the masters as of the students. What added to his singular charm was a certain timidity and reserve which belong to fine natures, and which are at once the index and the accompaniment of real genius. Still, this modest manner concealed an ambition and a vanity on which, later in his “*Confessions*,” he dilates with his accustomed humility. But his pride was his least defect. The inordinate passions which consumed him found vent at last in a *liaison*, which he formed with one whose name he has concealed, but who, for fifteen

years, captivated him heart and soul ; who followed him in all his future wanderings, and from whom he never parted until, on the eve of his conversion, she quitted him to devote herself likewise entirely to the service of God. This terrible secret came to the ears of Monica in 372, when Augustine became a father ; and the gifted and brilliant boy (whom, hereafter, Augustine would only denominate as "the fruit of his sin") received from his then infatuated parent the name of *Adeodatus*, "Dieu-donné." Monica's despair and sorrow at this confirmation of her worst anticipations were so great that, at first, fears were entertained for her life. Even in public she could not restrain her tears. The Church has instituted on the 4th of May a festival in her honour, which might be called the "Feast of Tears" of a Christian mother. The whole office is imbued with that sad tone.* But she had one consolation, she no longer wept *alone*. Patricius, won by her noble example and tender piety, had become a Christian in deed and in truth ; and the tie between the husband

* 1. *Flebat et orabat assidue pia Parens super filium, per quem Dominus impiorum capita conquassavit.*

2. *Beata Mater, quæ implevit desiderium suum, dum pro salute filii plorans jugiter rogaret Dominum, exaudisti eam nec despexit lacrymas ejus, cum profuentes rigarent terram.*

3. *Hæc est illa vere flens Vidua, quæ filium diu et amare deflevit.*

4. *Elevaverunt flumina lacrymarum, Domine, per sanctam matrem, elevaverunt flumina vocem suam.*

5. *Flebat uberrimis lacrymis, etc. etc.—Brev. Rom. Aug. 4 Maii.*

and wife, once so cold, was now changed into a mutual devotion, arising from tenderness on the one hand, and gratitude on the other, producing a love which has no name this side of heaven. Few particulars are known of the death of Patricius. Soon after he had received the sacrament of Baptism he fell sick, and after several months of suffering, during which time he was nursed day and night by the angel guardian whom God had given him in his wife, he slept in Christ. To Monica the sorrow was deep and poignant. She remembered neither his faults nor his cruelties. She thought but of the soul she had saved, and which was just beginning to understand and enter into her own ; and in the tomb which she prepared for him she reserved a place for herself, so that she should never be separated from him to whom she had been for so many years the faithful and devoted spouse. Thus did God console His servant, so that she might not be altogether crushed by the misconduct of her son. At each step that Augustine had made towards evil, Patricius had made one towards good ; and so shall we ever see in her history. Alongside of the sorrow there came the consolation ; for the true source of her grief was her boundless love for her Saviour, who, in His tender mercy, compensated to her for her riven heart, by filling it with Himself.



CHAPTER II.



HE first work confided by God to St. Monica was accomplished. It had taken her seventeen years, and she was then thirty-nine years of age; but she had still a work to do (taking up, curiously enough, exactly the same space of time), before she would be permitted to enter into her rest.

It is a curious fact that almost all the great female saints have survived their husbands. . St. Monica, St. Paula, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. Hedwige, St. Ida, St. Françoise de Chautal, and a host of others. They pass through the marriage state, and enter into its joys as if to teach the world how to enjoy them with holiness and purity, and then God takes away the desire of their eyes with a stroke, as if He were jealous of their love, and claimed their whole hearts; and perhaps, also, because their souls needed the

purification of great suffering to raise them to the higher paths in which He had called them to walk. It seems also that the happier their married lives are, the sooner they are bidden to relinquish them. St. Elizabeth was only twenty, St. Hedwige twenty-three, St. Chautal twenty-nine, when God dashed the cup of earthly happiness from their lips. St. Monica was older ; but then her married life had been crowned with thorns. No sooner had she begun to taste its sweetness than she became a widow. And yet, hardly had the grave closed upon Patricius, when Monica's spirit rose to higher flights of sanctity and heroism. It is not known whether or not St. Monica received from the bishop the widow's dress and consecrated veil which the Church accorded to those who, devoting their lives henceforth to God, were employed in various sacred ministrations. Perhaps her fear of not being altogether free to fly to the side of her boy when necessary prevented her making this solemn dedication of herself. But it is certain that, partly out of love for the memory of her husband, and partly from a higher motive, she made a vow that her life in future should belong solely to God. St. Augustine, writing of her at this time, compares her to one of the widows of whom St. Paul speaks, who "widows indeed, and desolate," continued in prayer day and night, devoting themselves to

the care of the sick and the suffering, and filling up the void which earthly affection had left by the love of Jesus Christ, henceforth their only spouse.

Such was the life of the widowed Monica ; and to the mourning which she always wore was added the deeper mourning of a mother who sees her son perishing before her eyes without any power of saving him but by her prayers and self-immolation. She had never cared for worldly pleasures, but now she determined to renounce them altogether. Dressed with that austere simplicity which becomes a woman whose life in the world has ended, she added the severest mortifications. Her life was one continual fast. Her love for the poor, so long restrained, burst forth in the most energetic, practical, and devoted service. Her greatest happiness was to visit the sick in the hospitals, or in their homes, to dress their wounds, to relieve their wants, and to watch day and night by the bedsides of those suffering members of her Lord. To these labours she added the laying out of their bodies after death, a custom then universally practised by Christian widows, however rich and noble, who thought it no disparagement to their rank to wash themselves those bodies so lately the temples of the Holy Ghost, and to prepare them with tender and reverent care for

sepulture. Then she would accompany them to their last resting-place, and cause prayers to be said for their souls. But one work above all others was dear to her heart, and that was the care of orphan children. She watched over them with maternal tenderness, brought them up as her own, and taught them, above all, those principles of faith which they could no longer learn at their mother's knee. She daily brought children to God, that God might one day give her back her own. When will a mother's instinct be at fault?

But she had still another great mission: it was that of consoling not only widows but married women. Many think of the first, few of the second; and yet none often have to bear deeper wounds, the more bitter because secret: with a smile on their lips, they have death in their hearts. How many homes are there in which love is not; or if it have once existed, where it has been replaced by indifference, or neglect, and the ashes of past joys! How many people whom the world envies bear in their souls a sword, piercing through and through, however sheathed from human sight! St. Monica knew it all by experience, and so with inexpressible gentleness, with exquisite delicacy, and with that wonderful intuition which charity gives, she succeeded in soothing, strengthening, and

healing those sad and breaking hearts in a way which was almost miraculous. In her conversation she never let slip any word which could wound the most susceptible. Charity ever characterised her gentle loving spirit, and years after her death it was said of her, that no one could remember having heard her utter a syllable which did not teem with that ardent faith and love with which her whole heart was filled.

Such was Monica's life ; and as, even in the exercise of charity, physical weariness will sometimes supervene, she sought day by day that rest and refreshment which the presence of our Lord in His tabernacle can alone afford. Morning and evening, in the little church of Tagaste, was she to be seen, kneeling in the selfsame corner as she had done as a child, absorbed in prayer and adoration, with a mingled expression of sorrow and hope on the pale and beautiful face ever fixed on the altar, and drawing from thence stores of comfort and courage and strength for her sad and arduous duties. She communicated daily at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, when she was often favoured with great and special graces. She had the tenderest devotion for the saints and martyrs, performing pilgrimages at their tombs, and offering, according to the custom of those times, bread and wine on their altars at all the anniversaries of their

feasts. But of all religious mysteries, the one which most sensibly affected her was that of the passion of our Lord; the very sight of the crucifix filled her with emotion; and, on one particular occasion, while meditating on this miracle of suffering Divinity, God overwhelmed her with such a flood of light and of love, that her tears compelled her to leave the church.* This is almost the only event in her religious life which has not been buried in obscurity. It would seem as if God wished to hide from us her noble existence as daughter, wife, servant of the poor, or contemplative, to reveal her to us solely as a *mother*.

In this quality she became greater day by day. The death of Patricius had left her in a position of great pecuniary embarrassment. Not that she dreaded poverty for herself, but she could not bear that, for want of means, Augustine's education should be cut short, and a boy of his powers and intellect thrown back on the idle, listless life of one living at home in a small provincial town. Sooner than expose him to a risk like this, she

* This fact is alluded to in the following hymn:—

O matrona gratiosa,
Quam transfigunt amorosa
Crucifixi stigmata;
His accensa sic ploravit
Lacrymis quod irrigavit
Pavimenti schemata.—*Hymn. Sanctæ Monic.*

resolved to impose on herself the hardest sacrifices. Augustine at this time not only realised but surpassed the expectations of his masters. To brilliant intellect and wonderful eloquence, he added a knowledge of metaphysics and a power of grasping subjects considered almost beyond the teaching of the schools, which amazed the professors, and often left them far behind him in the race. His manner and exterior corresponded with his rare talents ; of the middle height, and of a nervous, frail, and delicate temperament (so often the portion of chosen souls, as remarks St. Gregory of Nazianzen), he had that simple dignity, modesty, and reserve which characterise the possessor of great gifts ; while his profound tenderness of heart and exquisite sensibility made him irresistible in persuasion, and added an indefinable charm to his natural elegance and distinction.* To bury a youth of such promise in an obscure home seemed unbearable ; yet with all her privations, Monica felt, day by day, the impossibility of finding the necessary resources for his college life. Still, her faith

* In a very old portrait, which is preserved at Milan, taken at this time, St. Augustine is thus represented :— “È vestito in una forma veramente propria o di quei tempi o per lo meno de’ paesi dell’ Africa : nè è molto dissimile da quella che anco ne’ nostri giorni si costuma generalmente in Levante. Il colore è vermiglio tendente al fosco ; la fronte stesa ; lo sguardo penetrante sì, ma dolce e sospeso ; la struttura del corpo ristretta e gentile.”

did not fail ; she hoped and prayed ; and God rewarded her simple trust in His Providence by putting it into the heart of one of the richest citizens of Tagaste, named Romanianus, to come forward and offer to defray the expenses of the young Augustine's education. He did more : he offered him a room in his own house in Carthage, so as to put him completely at his ease ; and this generosity was accompanied with a delicacy and nobleness of spirit which prevented his feeling the weight of the obligation. To the heart of Monica this double boon became a source of never-failing gratitude ; and when, later, Romanianus had a son, whom he named Licentius, exposed to the difficulties and temptations which so often beset boys in a brilliant position, Monica watched over him with a tenderness and vigilance which knew no bounds, as if, by being a mother to Licentius, she would repay Romanianus for having been a second father to Augustine.

Free from all anxiety as to the education and future of her son, Monica now urged him more and more to follow that higher course of science and philosophy, which, with a kind of presentiment, she felt would eventually bring him to the knowledge of God. The "Hortensius" of Cicero, which she then put into his hands, seemed for a time to revive in his heart that love for what is noble and good, that thirst for wisdom,

and that contempt for the world, which are always inherent in great minds. But, after a time, Augustine became dissatisfied with this ardent pursuit of the philosophy of the ancients. He was discouraged at the uncertainty and contradictions of their various systems. Everywhere he seemed to be searching for light, and found nothing but flashes here and there—half-truths, fragments of knowledge—but nothing certain, conclusive, or sure. He was as a man following a shadow, which always eluded his tangible grasp; or as one dying of thirst, pursuing vainly the mirage lake of the desert. Another thing disappointed him. He found a beautiful theory, in which God and truth and order were ranged side by side; but one thing was wanting, and that was the Saviour. “That name of Jesus Christ,” he says in the third book of his “Confessions,” “I had drunk it in with my mother’s milk. It had remained ever in the depths of my soul, so that the tenderest fibres of my nature remained untouched.” Here again we see the mother’s work: the heart of her child, once touched by the chords of that love, would never vibrate again but at the sacred name.

Dissatisfied with these studies, therefore, St. Augustine turned once more to the Holy Scriptures. But the time was not yet come. To understand the Gospel, is granted but to the

humble, the simple, the pure in heart. Augustine, in his intellectual pride, despised the form in which its sublime truths are clothed ; and, after reading a few pages, closed the book in disgust. A few years were yet to pass before we shall see that same man, whom the grace of God has at last touched, reopening that selfsame book, and shedding over one of its passages those floods of tears which have, more than his genius, immortalised his name. But the time was not yet ; and Monica had still to wait, till her prayers and tears had done their work in softening the stony soil, that the seed sown might bring forth fruit.

There existed at this time a sect called the Manichean, whose doctrines were mingled with Persian, Chaldean, and Egyptian theories ; and, like all heresies, had a powerful effect on young and earnest minds, from the prospect it professed to hold out of a complete social reform. It had also the charm of mystery, for it was a secret society ; and its members claimed as their charter the liberty of private judgment, rejecting all appeal to authority or discipline. What more tempting to a spirit like Augustine's, proud of his intellect, thirsting for truth, but wishing to find it in his own way ; a victim to his passions, and thankful to find a system which, with an apparently high moral standard, yet dispensed him from the need of repentance or confession ?

Augustine fell into the snare ; and, disregarding the warnings of the Church or the advice of his mother, from whom he carefully concealed his intention, he publicly apostatised from the faith, and had his name inscribed among the number of the auditors, which was the first step of initiation into the sect. With the zeal and enthusiasm of a convert, he devoted all the energies of his mind and heart to winning others over to what he considered truth. His ascendancy over his friends had been always extraordinary ; it was enough to know him, to love and follow him, if possible, to the ends of the earth. What wonder then that Romanianus, his benefactor, Alypus, Honoratus, Nebridius, and a host of others, whose devotion to him was only equalled by their profound admiration for his talents, were rapidly seduced by him into the like errors ? St. Monica could scarcely believe the terrible news when the relations of these his friends came to her in despair with the tidings of their apostasy, owing to the influence and example of her son. The long vacation was beginning. Augustine was to return home ; and Monica waited, with an agony which mothers only can estimate, for a confirmation of her worst fears. But when Augustine had arrived, and, with the pride of heresy, burst forth at once against the authority of the Church, Monica's spirit was fairly roused. Mingling re-

proaches with her tears, she ordered him to leave her house, and never again to set foot in it till by humility and submission he had atoned for his fault. A command of this nature was not to be resisted ; and Augustine, quitting his mother's roof, took up his abode in the house of Romanianus. To estimate the heroism of this act on Monica's part, we must recollect not only her passionate devotion to her boy, and his great and singular charm, but his strong personal affection for herself, which made the rupture the more intolerable to her mother's heart. But her love of God and of His truth triumphed over all natural feelings : she saw our Lord outraged by her son's acts ; and, to vindicate His honour, crushed every human weakness. Her grief, however, was so profound that she seemed as one dead ; and, when the effort had been made, and the last echo of Augustine's receding footsteps had died away, the broken-hearted mother cast herself at the foot of the cross, and there, with an agony too deep for tears, implored the Divine aid and guidance in her terrible need. This prayer was heard and answered. That very night, when, worn out by contending emotions, she was sleeping the sleep of pure exhaustion, she had a dream thus described by St. Augustine. " She appeared to be standing on a plank of wood, sadly and alone, when a youth of bright

and glistening aspect approached her, and asked her the cause of her sorrow. She replied, that she wept for the loss of her son. ‘Do not be troubled,’ he replied, gaily; ‘see, he is here, by your side.’ She looked behind her, and saw him standing on the same plank.” This vision gave her the hope and consolation she so much needed. She repeated it to St. Augustine, who knew his mother too well to doubt her sincerity for an instant, but who tried to interpret her dream in his own sense, and said that it meant *she* would join *him*. “No, no!” exclaimed St. Monica; “the angel did not say, ‘Where he is, you will be,’ but, ‘*be will be where you are.*’”*

It was about this time that Augustine left Carthage, and during the two years which were to elapse before he was old enough to be called to the bar, he opened a school of grammar and rhetoric at Tagaste. As, unfortunately, he did not come *alone*, he accepted Romanianus’s offer of a house in the town, where he lived during the whole course of his teaching. But he came to see his mother daily; for, in spite of his heresy, he was always the most devoted and respectful of sons. Between them there never were any religious discussions. Each avoided them with care; Augustine, out of respect for

* “Non, inquit, non enim mihi dictum est: ‘Ub ille et tu;’ sed, ‘Ubi tu et ille.’”—*Confess.* lib. iii. cap. xi.

his mother ; Monica, because she hoped more from prayer than from controversy. But, on the other hand, she never missed an occasion of inciting men of weight and ability to enter the lists with her son, always hoping that, through their means, he might some day be brought to see the force and beauty of Catholic truth. One day, particularly, she heard of the arrival at Tagaste of a very learned and saintlike bishop, who had himself passed through the Manichean heresy, and had an intimate knowledge of Holy Scriptures. She flew to find him, and related to him all her difficulties, imploring him to come to her aid. But the bishop, an adept in the discernment of characters, shook his head, saying, the time was not yet come, that her son was too freshly embarked in this heresy, and therefore too full of vanity and presumption to be disposed to listen. "Leave him alone," he added ; "only pray a great deal." To console her, for Monica was crying bitterly, he told her his own story. He had been brought up as a Manichee by his mother, whom that heresy had perverted ; grown older, he began to translate Manichean works, and this labour, without controversy or argument, opened his eyes to the truth, by showing him the fallacy of their arguments and the weakness of their ground. "Thus," he added, "it will be with your son,

he will find out the folly of this heresy for himself." And as Monica, who would not believe him, went on imploring him with tears to see Augustine and try to convince him, the venerable bishop, touched by her importunity, exclaimed, "*Go in peace. It cannot be that the son of such tears should perish.*"* This word touched Monica to the quick. It seemed to have come direct from heaven. She returned home strengthened, encouraged, and consoled. In this noble thought we seem to see two things: first, that it is impossible to the eye of faith that earnest prayers offered by man to God should not be heard and answered in His own time and way; that if one prayer above all others reaches the ear of God, it is that of a mother for her child; and secondly, that it is equally impossible that the child of such a mother should be lost, for in his heart she must have breathed some portion of the fire and love which consumes her own, and implanted in his breast that imperishable conscience which, though now it may sleep, will one day wake and speak with an irresistible force.

Christian mothers! you, whose sons are breaking your hearts by their wild and evil courses, do not be discouraged. Under the burning lava of

* "Vade, fieri non potest ut filius istarum lacrymarum pereat."—*Confess. lib. iii. cap. xii.*

their passions there still remains the little seed you have planted in their childhood ; the spark of faith remains, though covered over for the time by cold and apparently dead ashes. The souls of your children are like vases of alabaster which have once contained a sweet and precious perfume, and which retain a portion of the delicious aroma even after being profaned by a thousand viler uses. Only for this, you must labour ; you must weep ; you must pray ; you must accuse, not Heaven, but yourselves ; you must smite your breasts and weep that you have not yet wept enough : and be assured that your prodigal sons will be restored to you in that day when you shall have filled up the measure of those sufferings which win from God the redemption of your children.

Two years had nearly elapsed in the conscientious discharge of his functions as professor, when an event occurred which gave, as it were, the first shake to that edifice of security in which Augustine had been living, regardless of the future, or only thinking of it as of a probably brighter cast than the present. This was the death of one of his most intimate friends, of his intense affection for whom he speaks in his "Confessions" in these terms, "Non poterat anima mea sine illo." Seized with fever, and unconscious, this young man received, while in that state, the

sacrament of Baptism. Augustine, who never left his bedside, began, during his lucid intervals, to ridicule the ceremony, in which the Manicheans professed to disbelieve; but, to his utter astonishment, his dying friend, hitherto so submissive to his teachings, and whom he had himself perverted, indignantly repulsed his impious suggestions, and with a holy boldness commanded entire silence on that point. St. Augustine, surprised at his vehemence, desisted, reserving the discussion to the period of his friend's convalescence; but God preserved him from such a peril by death, and Augustine, returning a short time after to his room, found that all was over. His sorrow and despair were overwhelming. No religious consolation was at hand to lighten the burden of his grief. The sight of other people going on as usual, full of their business or their pleasures—a sight ever trying to the heart that mourns—filled him with indignation as well as anguish. How could they be just the same when, to him, all the world was darkened? The house where they had lived and worked together became insupportable to him; he could no longer occupy himself; he passed his days and nights in tears. At last his friends, seriously alarmed for his health, which this constant grief was undermining, advised him to quit Tagaste for a time and return to

Carthage. Monica, though filled with sorrow and anxiety at the idea, still urged his departure, feeling that his life depended on the change, and hoping also that in the great school of sorrow he would learn that lesson of the vanity of human joys and human hopes which sinks so deep in a riven heart. Augustine returned, therefore, to the seat of his former scholastic triumphs, and, in order to forget his grief, plunged deeper into study, especially of mathematics and physics. Strange to say, this study, for the first time, implanted doubts in his mind as to the truth of the Manichean heresy. Certain absurd and unprovable theories which Manes had introduced into his religious system with regard to astronomy and physical laws, startled Augustine, and made him enquire into the grounds of his belief in the rest. The result was a deep and growing anxiety as to whether he might not have been altogether deceived and misled. His Manichean friends, in order to quiet him, sent for one of their bishops named Faustus, a man of great eloquence, and with a peculiar charm of manner which at once fascinated Augustine and riveted his attention. Monica, who had watched the struggle going on in her son's mind, redoubled her prayers, her penances, and her tears at the sight of this fresh danger; and God overruled all according to her desire, by making Au-

gustine see the superficial character of Faustus's instruction, and the impossibility of having his doubts and difficulties cleared up by this means. His personal admiration of the bishop continued, but his confidence in him as a guide vanished for ever, and with it the Manichean illusions which had so long blinded his understanding to the truth. "O my God!" he exclaimed, in his "Confessions," "if, at this critical moment, Thou didst not abandon me, it was because of the tears with which my mother pleaded for me day and night, and of the sacrifice of her heart's blood for my salvation."

It is beautiful to trace Monica's conduct during these nine terrible years; first, the righteous indignation which banished Augustine from her roof; then the almost superhuman efforts she made to draw him from his errors; and at the greatest crisis of all, when she saw, as in a vision, truth and falsehood contending like good and bad angels for the soul of her son, the supreme sacrifice of herself, accepted by God, whereby, though far away, she was able to protect and save him. What a revelation is this to us of what a mother can and should accomplish!

But, free as Augustine now was from the trammels of the heresy which had so long enthralled him, he had not yet finally decided on his course; his eyes were not yet opened, nor his will moulded

to the will of God. Dissatisfied with himself, and in consequence with all around him, he wrote to his mother and announced to her his intention of quitting Carthage, and establishing himself at Rome. To Monica this intelligence brought unmixed terror. Rome in those days was the hotbed of Paganism and vice. It required a man of confirmed faith and sober judgment to stand his ground at all in an atmosphere where everything conspired to ruin and seduce him. Monica's decision was therefore quickly made. If Augustine was bent on going, she would accompany him, and endeavour, by giving him the shelter of a holy home, to save him, as far as in her lay, from the perils with which he would be surrounded.

But this did not come into Augustine's calculations. He was determined to go, and to go *alone*. He was then thirty years of age ; though he still loved his mother, he had lost the tenderness of his boyhood towards her, and the time was not yet come when, disappointed and wearied with the world, the heart of the son would fly back to her as to the ever faithful haven of rest and of unselfish, undying love ; which would raise his affection almost to a worship, and to a trembling consciousness of the very few years the untold blessing would yet be granted to him.

So Augustine continued his preparations for

departure ; but they were not rapid enough ; for the day before his intended embarkation, Monica appeared at Carthage, and, throwing her arms round his neck, implored him either to give up Rome or to take her with him. To quiet her, Augustine promised to remain ; telling her he would only accompany a friend (who was starting on the same voyage) to see him off in the vessel, and then return to her. In thus lying to his mother, Augustine flattered himself she would remain in the town, and would allow him to go off quietly with his friend to the harbour. But she would not leave him, and accompanied him to the seashore.

It was towards evening ; a fearful storm had been raging for several days, and the contrary wind prevented the sailing of the ship, which was still at anchor in the port. While waiting for the change, which the sailors predicted that night, the two friends walked up and down on the shore, and Monica with them, both the young men very much embarrassed by her company. At last, it got quite dark, and as there seemed no prospect of the departure of the vessel, Monica was persuaded to seek a place of shelter and repose. There was a little chapel on the shore dedicated to St. Cyprian, of which the ruins are still visible. Here St. Monica consented to retire, and spend the night in prayer :

and strangely did God seem to answer that petition ; for, in a few hours, the wind changed, the anchor was weighed, and St. Augustine, sitting on the poop of the vessel, saw his native shores recede from his view ; while his mother, leaving the chapel in the morning, sought in vain for traces either of her son or of the ship ; and, almost wild with grief, which her boy's deception had so greatly embittered, she wandered up and down the shore, giving vent to her agony in tears and cries which would have melted the sternest heart. Yet, in God's inscrutable decrees, this very voyage to Italy was to accomplish that which was the desire of her heart, and the object of her prayers. So true is it that we must "pray in faith, nothing wavering," and never be discouraged, though all should appear contrary to us ; knowing that the promises of God are sure, and that He will accomplish them in His own time and way.





CHAPTER III.

MONICA returned, broken-hearted, to Tagaste, where, as is touchingly said by her biographer, "Tears every day marked the place in church where she knelt to pray for her erring boy." In the meantime, Augustine arrived safely at Rome, and took up his abode in the house of a Manichean friend. But there, whether less precautions were taken before him or from other causes, the whole corruption and scandalous orgies of the sect became known to him, and so revolted his purer and higher nature, that he at once broke with them, then and for ever. This was a great step; but he was not yet to find peace. The Catholic Church at Rome was at that time governed by St. Damasus, whose secretary, St. Jerome, was filling the world with his eloquence. A council had been summoned by the Holy Pope to discuss some of the grave questions which

then, as now, agitated men's minds; and St. Ambrose of Milan, St. Epiphanius of Cyprus, St. Valerian of Aquila, Paul of Antioch, and a host of other learned and venerable fathers, had hastened to answer to the appeal. Side by side with these pillars of the Church, were the twin-sisters, Virginity and Charity, sprung from the foot of Calvary, who were to continue to the end to give the world the example of a religion of which the watchword was Love. Women of the highest rank and of the gentlest blood were seen then, as now, tending the sick, succouring the orphan, comforting the widow, instructing the poor; and round St. Jerome were grouped that noble band of widows, St. Paula, Fabiola, Eustochia, Marcella, and the like, trained by him to a spirit of devotion and self-sacrifice which has made them an example to all succeeding ages. Had Augustine chosen to look into these things, he would have been the first to sympathise and admire. But there are seasons in men's lives when "their eyes are blinded that they see not." Augustine was so fully persuaded that the Catholic Church taught doctrines not only absurd in themselves, but subversive of liberty and incompatible with human reason, that he never so much as gave its study a thought. Disgusted both with the reasonings of the schools and the vagaries of the sect to which he had belonged,

he made up his mind to believe in *nothing*. This decision, however, was far from giving him consolation. His spirit was too upright to be satisfied with it, and a profound melancholy came over him which he tried in vain to dispel. Soon after, he caught the Roman fever, and in a few days his life was despaired of. "O my God!" he exclaims in his "Confessions," speaking of that time, "if I had died then, where would have been my soul? But here again I was preserved by my mother's prayers. Never can I describe what her love for me was; and Thou, O my God! Thou didst not permit me to die in my impenitence, lest her mother's heart should have been so deeply wounded that no healing could have reached it." St. Augustine recovered, and recommenced his work; but he did not recover his tranquillity of mind. The dissolute character of the majority of the students who formed his classes, revolted his delicacy; and the chair of rhetoric at Milan falling vacant, he entered himself as a candidate, and having received the appointment, after a public trial, in which he was loaded with honours and applause, he left Rome for Milan in the year 385.

St. Monica had for a long time felt an increase of anxiety and distress at the melancholy tone of Augustine's letters; and at last came to the resolution that she would rejoin him, at whatever

cost. In those days such a journey for a woman was attended with endless difficulties. She was obliged also to sell almost all she possessed to meet the expense. But what hardships or privations can stand in the way of a mother's love? She embarked, therefore, from the same port which had witnessed her hour of misery two years before. Hardly had she set sail, when a frightful tempest came on. The hearts of all failed for fear; the very sailors gave up hope. Monica alone, strong in faith and purpose, consoled and cheered them one by one, and by her calmness and courage succeeded in allaying their fears. They arrived safely at Civita Vecchia, and Monica flew on to Rome. What was her dismay at finding her son already gone! The letters in which he had announced to her his success and departure for Milan had never reached her, and at first her disappointment seemed almost too keen to bear. But she was not a woman to give up a plan which she had once deliberately conceived. Milan is two hundred leagues distant from Rome, and to arrive at it one must traverse the Apennines; but as the dangers of the sea had not appalled, so neither did the fatigues nor perils of the land deter her. So, after a day's rest, she started off again in pursuit of her child, with that indomitable faith which saw no obstacle in the path of duty.

And it was well that she persevered, for the moment was at hand when God had decreed that she was to receive her consolation. It was at Milan that Augustine was to emerge from darkness into light, and it was fitting that his mother should be there. She had been present at his death ; it was just she should be likewise present at his resurrection.

The episcopal chair at Milan at that time was filled by St. Ambrose ; and it seemed as if he had been sent there on purpose to guide, direct, and enlighten the troubled spirit of Augustine. Like him, he had passed his youth in the world, had devoted himself to the study of eloquence, and gained celebrity at the bar ; had been blessed with a mother of singular holiness, and yet remained a catechumen until the age of thirty. Then an unexpected event changed his whole career. The bishopric of Milan fell vacant. Two parties disputed the election, with an animosity which threatened bloodshed. Ambrose, as prefect of the town, came to the church to quell the disorder. He addressed the people with a moving eloquence, which began to have its effect, when a child's voice exclaimed, "Let Ambrose be our bishop!" This innocent voice appeared to the disputants like a voice from heaven, and Ambrose, in spite of his tears and protestations, was unanimously elected to the

vacant episcopal chair. After eight days of solitude and prayer he was consequently ordained priest, and immediately afterwards, bishop. Then, as a flower expands in the sun, did the noble character of Ambrose burst forth with the laying on of hands. He became the marvel of his age. The wisest of statesmen and the holiest of bishops; one day rebuking emperors and kings with holy boldness, and the same night spending hours in the confessional or in humble penances for the sins of his flock ; vindicating in council the doctrines of the Church at one moment, and the next pouring out his whole soul in pious hymns of praise (which he has left as a heritage to Catholics of all ages), this wonderful man became the instrument for the conversion of one who was to take place by his side on the altars of the Church.

One of the first visits paid by St. Augustine at Milan was to St. Ambrose. He owed it to his position, having been appointed to a professorial chair in his episcopal see ; but he was also attracted to him by that wonderful sympathy which unites kindred souls. St. Ambrose received him with joy and with the most paternal kindness ; and from that moment Augustine loved him as a son. However necessary Monica's presence at this moment might be to Augustine's conversion, it would not have sufficed alone. What the mother begins with tears, and love, and prayers, the priest

completes with the authority, the word, and the blood of Jesus Christ ; and so it was needful that the two should labour hand in hand in the great work to which God's Holy Spirit was to give the increase. Not content with seeing St. Ambrose privately, St. Augustine determined to go and hear him preach, which he did every Sunday, on the Holy Scriptures, avoiding controversy, and making use of fine and ingenious allegories, with which he threw light on the more obscure passages of Holy Writ. This was the very method to please and soothe the sick soul of Augustine, who abandoned himself to the pleasure of hearing him without restraint, little suspecting the effect this simple and touching eloquence would have on his future life. Yet, convinced as he was that there could be no truth in the Catholic Church, these very sermons made him the more despairing. He saw the folly of all other systems, but as yet he could not believe in the Church of God.

It was at this moment of cruel doubt and uncertainty that Monica arrived ; and great was the joy of both mother and son at their reunion. One never values family affection so much as when in sadness or sorrow ; and Augustine was in a state of mind which sorely needed a mother's soothing hand. As soon as they were alone together, he told her he had ceased to be a

Manichean, expecting to see her filled with joy at the news. But she said nothing. It was not enough for her that he had given up heresy ; she wanted to see him a fervent Catholic ; and gaining boldness from his renewed confidence, she spoke to him strongly, and openly expressed her convictions that before her death she would have the joy of seeing him united with her in faith and hope. Augustine shook his head, and answered only by a bitter smile. But Monica was not discouraged. She knew her son too well to imagine he would ever remain satisfied with a negative religion. Her first idea after having embraced her boy, was to find St. Ambrose, and to pour into his loving, fatherly heart all her fears, anxieties, and hopes for him. St. Ambrose received her with a joy mingled with emotion. His previous admiration for her saintlike character was enhanced by personal knowledge, so that he never saw Augustine afterwards without congratulating him on having such a mother. On the other hand, St. Monica found in St. Ambrose all that she had ever dreamed of or hoped for in a director for her son ; and a mutual affection and veneration sprung up between them, of which the link was the precious soul, the fate of which seemed still to hang in the balance. It must also be remembered that Monica had only two more years to live—two years, during which

Divine Providence gave her the help and guidance of this great saint, in order to bring her soul into still higher paths of perfection. Her one thought was still the same—to pray, and weep, and sacrifice herself for her boy ; and if she watched more diligently over her own conduct, if she became still more careful of every idle word or thought, and grew day by day in humility, recollection, and self-abnegation, it was still on account of her boy ; so that her prayers might be more pure, that her heart, more closely united with God, might send forth a cry which would at last find acceptance with Him. And who so well as St. Ambrose knew how to deal with a soul like hers, and to give it the direction needed to attain the desired end ?

The intimacy once established between Augustine and the holy bishop, Monica left no stone unturned to promote and increase it, either by taking him with her when she visited the Episcopal Palace, or by sending him on various pretexts to ask for his advice for herself, and thus give him an occasion of entering into conversation with him. One day, for instance, she did not know what to do about the Saturday's fast. It was observed in Africa and in Rome ; it was not observed in Milan. She sent St. Augustine to enquire, and received these words in answer, which have since become a rule to Catholics :

“Follow the custom of the Church where you are. If you are at Rome, fast with the Church of Rome; but if you are at Milan, do not fast when the Church of Milan does not do so.”

To the love and veneration she entertained for St. Ambrose, she added a tender and profound obedience. This was tested soon after her arrival in Milan, when St. Monica went, according to the custom of the African Church, to offer bread, wine, and meats on the altar of the saint whose festival was that day celebrated. St. Ambrose sent the porter to stop her, and refused her permission to enter the church with her basket, this rite having been lately forbidden at Milan, in consequence of the abuses which had arisen from the practice. Monica, to whom this prohibition was quite new, might have been hurt and mortified at this abrupt refusal of her gifts, and still more at being publicly stopped in church. But not a trace of vexation or mortification could be seen on her countenance. Meekly bowing her head, she obeyed without a word, and swiftly leaving the church, distributed the contents of her basket among the poor, and then returned to feed herself on the body of her Lord.

A moment of grave crisis had arrived for the Church at Milan, which strengthened Augustine's affection for the bishop, by awakening all that was generous, chivalrous, and enthusiastic in his

disposition. The Empress Justinia, surrounded by a clique of Arian courtiers, had sent to St. Ambrose at Easter to desire that one of the Basilicas should be given up to the Arians for their use, suggesting either one outside the walls, or the metropolitan church in which St. Ambrose himself officiated. The saint refused, replying, with holy boldness, that a priest could not give up his temple to the wolves. By this refusal he incurred the hatred of a woman all-powerful for mischief, and who was capable of anything. She first sent soldiers to seize the Basilica of Portia, and to surround that in which St. Ambrose was saying mass. But as all the people rallied round their much-loved bishop, the soldiers did not dare penetrate within the building; only, for several days, a kind of civil war was carried on in Milan. St. Ambrose, during the whole time, never left the church. At one moment before the altar pleading with prayers and tears that no blood might be shed on his account; and then, in the pulpit, explaining the Holy Scriptures, calming the excited people, and teaching them respect for the law, at the same time that he enforced with a brilliancy and energy which electrified his hearers, the doctrine of the liberty of souls, and that of the Church of Christ, which is their home, their refuge, and their mother. To the repeated summons of

the Court to give up the Basilicas to the Emperor, to whom, as they affirmed, everything belonged, he replied, "If the Emperor were to ask for what is mine, although in reality it be the property of the poor, I should not refuse; but the temples of God are not mine to give. Does he wish for my own patrimony? Let him take it. Or my body? I wish for nothing better. Do not fear that I would throw myself on the affection of my people and ask them to defend me. I would far rather offer myself a sacrifice for the altar." To the eunuch who exclaimed, "You despise the Empress; I will have you beheaded;" he replied, "God grant that your threat may be accomplished. I shall suffer as a bishop and a martyr." To the officers of the Emperor, he pleaded his devotion to the young Prince, whereby he had already twice saved his crown from the hands of Maximinian; and then, with the holy boldness which afterwards characterised St. Thomas of Canterbury on a like occasion, exclaimed, "If you wish for my life, strike; I am ready to die! But God forbid that I should cede to you the heritage of Jesus Christ, the heritage of my predecessors, the heritage of St. Denis, who died in exile for his faith; the heritage of the holy confessor, Enstorgius, and all the other holy bishops, my fathers in God. I will render to Cæsar the

things which are Cæsar's, but to God the things which are God's." And to show that he was ready to suffer or to die according to the Emperor's will and pleasure, he left his door open day and night, and remained in his usual room, ready to go into exile or to death according to the orders he should receive. The Empress, frightened at the noble and dignified attitude of the bishop, hesitated and drew back, but only for a little while. Listening to the evil suggestions of her Arian courtiers, she appointed an Arian bishop of Milan, and Ambrose having refused to appear before the mock council she had assembled, and which pretended to judge between him and the Arian interloper, the holy bishop was formally deposed, condemned to exile, and soldiers were sent to seize his person and convey him out of Italy. The saint retired into his cathedral, and the spectacle of the unarmed and venerable old man pleading for his enemies before the altar of God, moved the hearts of the people towards him as one man. They surrounded their pastor, and would not leave him day or night. This state of siege lasted for eight or nine days, and it was during that time that St. Ambrose introduced into the Church of Milan the chanting of the Psalms in alternate parts, which was afterwards universally adopted; and also composed those famous

hymns,* which the Church has embodied in her Liturgy, and which raised the devotion of his people to a pitch of enthusiasm which determined them to die sooner than allow their bishop to fall into the hands of his enemies. This magnificent spectacle touched Augustine to the heart, and awoke all that was noblest in his nature. As for his mother, the sight of the danger of her spiritual father, and the saintlike heroism of his behaviour throughout, filled her with anguish, which yet was mingled with a holy joy and exultation at what she justly considered his greatest triumph. She lived in the church, she hung on his words, and there, in the midst of such solemn influences of time and place, she advanced with rapid strides towards perfection. She lived henceforth but for God and for His Church, and the flower which was so soon to bear its perfect fruit, blossomed more fully day by day.

* It is difficult to imagine that these hymns were composed in the midst of such perils, so completely do they breathe a spirit of peace and joy and calm. Those that have descended to our days are:—“Æterne rerum conditor;” “Deus Creator omnium;” “Jam surget hora tertia;” “Veni, Redemptor gentium;” “Illuminans altissimus;” “Fit porta Christi pervia;” “Orabo mente Dominum;” “Somno refectis artibus;” “O lux! beata Trinitas;” “Consors paterni luminis;” “Æterna Christi munera;” “Jesu, nostra Redemptio;” “Conditor alme siderum;” “Rerum Creator optime;” “Splendor Paternæ Gloriæ;” “Immense cœli conditor;” Cœli Deus Sanctissime;” “Nox atra rerum contigit;” “Magnæ Deus potentia;” “Tu Trinitatis Unitas;” “Æterna cœli gloria;” “Plasmator hominis Deus;” “Summæ Deus clementia;” “Lux ecce surgit aurea;” and several others.

Little by little the sermons of St. Ambrose began to have their effect on the mind of St. Augustine. His preaching had a singular charm for him ; and the marble pulpit is still shown in Milan from whence the holy bishop spoke to his people, and which he rarely entered without seeing below him the holy widow and “ the child of many tears.” St. Augustine was first ashamed to find that many things which he had ridiculed in the doctrines of the Church had simply no existence except in his own imagination, and that “ it was not against the Catholic religion ” (as he says in his “ *Confessions* ”) “ that he had barked, but against a chimera invented by its enemies.”* Looking back on his own life also, he began to see how many things he was compelled to take *on trust*, whether he would or not—his birth, for instance ; he was the son of Patricius and Monica, but how could he prove it ? If, therefore, in human things, he was compelled to believe the witness of others, why not in divine ? It is under this aspect, in truth, that religion presents itself to a woman’s heart. Those *first causes*, so often a stumbling-block to the would-be learned, she does not discuss or dispute ; she *feels* them. No genius is required, thank God, for a clear intuition of the truth. It was this simplicity

* Is not this equally the case with Englishmen in the present day ?

in his mother's faith, of which Augustine began to see the beauty, and which he longed to imitate. There was one person alone who it seemed could force his way into Augustine's confidence at that time, and that person, strange to say, seemed not to occupy himself with the matter. One would fancy that he was ignorant of or indifferent to the struggles going on in Augustine's mind, and that in the multitude of people and affairs with which he had to deal St. Ambrose had forgotten Monica's son! Over and over again, St. Augustine went to him and came into his room, of which the door was never closed, hoping for a quiet half-hour, when he could pour out his whole soul to this wise and skilful physician, but either he was surrounded with other people or so absorbed in reading, that Augustine could only now and then obtain a word in answer to some direct question ; and after waiting, silent and humbled, for hours, would go away again without having obtained that for which he then began so earnestly to desire. But this conduct of St. Ambrose revealed the wonderful knowledge of character with which God had inspired him. Knowing Augustine's pride of reason and extraordinary powers, he would not allow him to enter into controversy. What controversy ever brought back a soul to God ? Besides, not only were Augustine's mental struggles fully known to

him, but also his private life. That woman who had so long disputed his heart with God, had followed him to Milan—he was living publicly with her in sin. Under these circumstances, what was the use of discussion? St. Monica, to whom he revealed his reasons and his plan, could not, in spite of her impatience, fail to recognise their wisdom; she contented herself with redoubling her prayers and tears. “Like the widow of Nain,” exclaims St. Augustine, in his “Confessions,” “she followed the bier of her son until the poignancy of her grief obtained from God the answer, ‘I say unto thee, Arise!’”

The event justified the wisdom of the saint.

Augustine could find no peace; the voice of his conscience reechoed the tears of his mother, till at last the tempest was at its height. Earnestly to desire to find the truth, and yet to shrink from the lifelong sacrifice it will entail; such is the position of hundreds of souls in the days in which we live, and so was it with Augustine. Had his heart been unfettered he would long ago have reconciled himself to God and His Church; but for fifteen years he had borne the yoke of a culpable *liaison*. He had been faithful to her, and she had followed him in all his wanderings, and given him a son, Adeodatus, the delight of his eyes, who was every day rejoicing both their hearts by the sweetness of his dis-

position, and the precociousness of his genius. How escape from such a position? How was it possible for him to give her up? And yet, without this sacrifice, how could he be admitted to baptism or confession, or the holy eucharist, or, in fact, to any of the sacraments of the Church? Monica thought of these things day and night; she felt it was no longer a question of belief or disbelief, but of human or divine love; and knowing the tenderness of heart of her son, she asked herself with perfect terror how it would be possible to break a chain so firmly riveted. Augustine had a friend named Alypus, who had followed him from Carthage, and who, though still uninstructed in the Catholic faith, led a life of such purity and chastity that Augustine's delicate and refined nature was charmed; without the example, however, being of sufficient force to induce him to follow Alypus's counsels. Foiled in her efforts in this direction, Monica now turned her attention to promoting his union with a young girl who seemed to unite all the qualities most desirable in a wife, and would be most calculated to win the heart of her son. She spoke to him on the subject, and that with such insistence, that Augustine, not daring either to accept or refuse, allowed his mother to act for him. The matter was consequently arranged between the respective families, but as the *fiancée*

was still quite young, their marriage was to be postponed for two years. As it was impossible, however, for Augustine to remain in the false position in which he then was, Monica pressed more urgently than ever for a separation from the mother of Adeodatus, and this fearful sacrifice was at last consummated. Of what he suffered from this separation Augustine only tells us one word, but that is enough. He writes, "I allowed myself to be torn from her who shared my life, and as my soul was one with hers, my riven heart shed tears of blood."

Who could feel for sorrow like this as much as a mother? And yet, where it was a question of right or wrong, she never hesitated. Like the French queen who would sooner see her son die than commit one mortal sin, she trampled on the very heart of her boy rather than encourage him, by false tenderness, to continue in a course of direct violation of God's law. As to the object of his love, history is silent as to the part she took in a separation which must have been worse than death. But what is certain is, that she retired to a convent, there to spend the rest of her life in penitence and prayer.

Monica began to breathe freely; the future seemed really promising. Augustine, surrounded by old friends, who had joined him from Africa, and free from the trammels which had hitherto

fettered him, seemed day by day returning to the paths of peace and holiness. The study of Plato, which at this time fell into his hands, opened his mind to understand if not the Gospel, yet the existence of the Word, co-eternal with God ; and with this knowledge came a flood of light, and a perception of the truth, which before had been dim and indistinct to him, and led him onwards and upwards to that faith which worketh by love.

“ I heard,” he exclaims in his “ Confessions,” “ as it were a voice speaking to me with authority, and saying, ‘ I am He ! ’ and with that voice all my doubts vanished. I should as soon have thought of doubting my existence as of the truth.”

How strangely does God’s Holy Spirit touch the hearts of men ! After having sought, and read, and argued, and disputed for years, suddenly, without any apparent reason, but generally *the day after some sacrifice*, the clouds disperse, and the sunshine of truth bursts on the soul. One asks oneself, “ How is it one never saw it before ? ” It seems now so clear, so indubitable ! And with this light comes a peace and a strength which fills the heart with a joy and exultation impossible to describe.

But Augustine had only made the first step. He felt he could not rest there, and in his feverish agitation he took up the Epistles of St. Paul, the

great theologian of the incarnate Word. "It was meet," observes Fletcher, "that the greatest of doctors should be conquered by the greatest of apostles." For the first time, the tremendous mysteries of man's fall, and his redemption by Jesus Christ, became revealed to him in all their inscrutable depth and glory. One might have imagined that it was enough for him to realise all this, and to fly to his mother with the words, "Weep no more. I am as you are." But he had not yet arrived at that. The clouds were not yet entirely dispelled. They would have been so if he had had the courage to kneel at St. Ambrose's feet, to smite his breast, and confess his faults; for there is a moment in our search after truth when the soul only earns the full light by an act of humility, and an entire surrender of the will to God. One must make the plunge in order to see clearly. Augustine felt this, but he was afraid. He wanted to see more clearly before he knelt, whereas one must kneel to see more clearly. St. Monica watched the crisis with an anxiety in which hope prevailed over fear. She could scarcely resist the words, "How long halt you between two opinions? You believe now, why not act?" Why? because he wanted still two things—humility and purity; and because of his pride, Jesus Christ hid Himself from him. "In spite

of my misery," writes St. Augustine, " I wanted to pass for a clever man ; and instead of weeping over my sins, I was inflated with vain science. I had found the pearl of great price, but when it came to the point that I must sell all my goods —that is, make a sacrifice of my passions and position—to buy it, I had not the courage!" In this state of indecision, he resolved at last to consult a holy and venerable old priest named Simplician—one of those kind and saintlike spirits towards whom the young and ardent, wearied and troubled with the storms and passions of life, turn, as to a calm haven of rest, in which they can pour out their hearts in confidence, and find peace. St. Augustine told him all his troubles, and especially the weakness which made him draw back at the very moment when his conscience urged him to press forward. Simplician received him with a gentle smile ; listened without surprise to his history ; and then, with that profound knowledge of human motives which one so often sees in men of his stamp, proceeded to tell him a story. He related to him the conversion of Victorinus, the translator of those books of Plato which had so charmed Augustine. This celebrated author had followed the same career as Augustine, and with such success, that he had obtained the rare honour of a statue in the Forum. Afterwards, chance, or rather Providence, induced

him to open the Holy Scriptures. Surprised, and entirely convinced, by their study, he said to Simplician, "Do you know that I have become a Christian?" — "I shall believe it," replied Simplician, "when I see you make your profession in the Church of Christ." And Victorinus answered, laughing, "Is it the walls, then, which make a Christian?" But the old priest spoke words of wisdom. Victorinus was afraid of the ridicule of his friends and of the scorn of men. However, he went on reading and praying; and the more he read and prayed, the more he felt his strength and courage increase. At last came the day when he felt more afraid of being denied by Jesus Christ than despised by his friends; and, fearful of any further delay, he ran to Simplician with the words, "Come to the church with me. I will be a Christian." When they were come, and it was proposed to Victorinus to make his confession of faith in secret, he energetically refused, and, courageously mounting the altar steps, began the "Credo." The crowd, who knew him well, both by sight and by name, called out, "Victorinus! Victorinus!" but he, no way intimidated, pronounced with a firm voice the words which proclaimed his faith. "From that moment," added Simplician, looking fixedly at Augustine, "this illustrious scholar gloried in learning as a little child in the school

of Christ. Julian the apostate having forbidden Christians to teach in the schools, his eloquent lips were closed, but with joy he made this, to him, the most painful of all sacrifices, and bowed, under the ignominious yoke of the cross, that head which had so often worn the crown."

This conversation touched Augustine to the quick. He came back to his mother in a state of excitement bordering on enthusiasm, repeated the story of Victorinus, and seemed determined to imitate him without delay. But he still had two wills, the old and the new; and the former induced him to say to his conscience, "By-and-by: wait a little longer!"

Monica became at last thoroughly discouraged and despairing. She had hoped so much from this visit to Simplician! Just at this time an old African friend of theirs, named Pontitianus, came to pay them a visit. He was employed as a military officer in the court of the Emperor, but had always remained a fervent Christian. He had travelled a great deal in Gaul, in Spain, in Italy, and in Egypt; and more and more penetrated with the marvellous work done by the Catholic Church in these countries, he began talking of the rise of religious houses which had taken root in Africa, and numbered already so many thousand men and women, devoting their whole lives to God in a state of virginity

and self-abnegation. Augustine knew nothing of all this. Like so many people who live alongside of the Catholic Church without ever seeing what she is, he had lived for thirty years close to Alexandria without ever having heard of St. Antony, or of those thousands of solitary saints with which the deserts were at that time peopled; still less of the virgins, both in Africa and in Milan itself, for whom St. Ambrose had written his admirable "Treatise," and who, by their noble works and devoted lives, had proved the Church to be indeed the spouse of Christ. St. Augustine, to whom the subject was altogether new, listened with rapt attention, and Pontitianus went on to relate what had happened to him when he was at Triers. One day, whilst the Emperor was at the circus, he had gone with three or four friends to walk in some gardens near the town. On their road two of them went into a hermit's cell, and found a manuscript life of St. Antony. They stopped to read it. The more they read the more they were struck at the picture of devotion it set forth. At last, one of them exclaimed to his friend, "Tell me to what, after all, does our life tend? What do we seek, or hope for? The favour of the Emperor? But that is here to-day and gone to-morrow! Instead of that, if we will seek the favour of God, it is ours at once, now and for ever!" His

words kindled a like spirit in the heart of his friend; and when Pontitianus and the rest joined them and warned them that the day was closing in, and that it was time to return home, they both announced their intention of giving up the world and devoting themselves henceforth solely to the service of God. Touched and surprised, Pontitianus could only congratulate them on having chosen the better part; and their intended brides, moved by a like spirit, on being informed of their decision, at once consecrated their virginity to God, and devoted themselves henceforth to works of charity and piety. Augustine, no longer able to contain his emotion, precipitately left his friend and went out into the garden; thither Alypus followed him, while Monica, who had eagerly watched the effect of Pontitianus' words, retired hastily to her room, and, throwing herself on her knees, implored the Holy Spirit to touch at last the heart of her son. The moment Augustine saw himself alone with Alypus, he exclaimed, "What are we doing! Did you not hear? The ignorant, the unlearned, carry the kingdom of heaven by storm, while we, with our boasted science, grovel on the earth. Is it not a shame that we have not the courage to imitate them?" Saying this, he left Alypus, who remained mute with astonishment, looking after Augustine, whose agitation showed

itself in every feature and every tone of his voice. Yet the struggle was terrible ; the nearer he felt himself to the sacrifice, the greater the terror with which the devil inspired him. He threw himself at last under a fig-tree, and there his sobs burst forth uncontrollably ; he felt himself utterly miserable, utterly hopeless, when, all of a sudden, a child's voice was heard singing and repeating these words, "Take and read! Take and read!" ("Tolle, lege! Tolle, lege!") These words appeared to St. Augustine as a voice from heaven, and rushing back to the place where he had left Alyfrus and his book, he took up the latter and opened it on the following passage :— "Let us walk honestly, as in the day ; not in rioting and drunkenness ; not in chambering and impurities ; not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences." There was no need to read more ; here was the answer to his doubts. He showed them to Alypus, he told him all that had passed in his heart, and together they returned to find St. Monica. Thus, after seventeen years of struggle, did Augustine at last yield to her tears ; and, strange to say, it was no sudden light vouchsafed to him, but a revelation of purity and innocence, by the mouth of a child, which had worked the miracle. So true is it that the difficulty is less in finding the truth

than in recovering lost virtue. This conversion has appeared to the Church such a miracle that she has commemorated it by a solemn festival, as she has done that of St. Paul, and the day chosen is the one immediately following the feast of our saint. The last hymns of the office of St. Monica mingle with those which rejoice over the conversion of her son, and thus are they blended together to all time on the altars of the Church.

Augustine's first thought had been to rush to his mother; he threw himself into her arms; he covered her with kisses and tears; the barrier which had so long existed between them was broken down for ever; and in that one long mute embrace, the agony of years rolled away from the mother's heart. At last, he felt the value of her tears. He repeated it, in every shape and way, to the very last day of his life. "It is to my mother," he exclaims, "that I owe all." "If I am Thy child, O my God, it is because Thou gavest me such a mother." "If I prefer the truth to all other things, it is the fruit of my mother's teaching." "If I did not long ago perish in sin and misery, it is because of the long and faithful tears with which she pleaded for me." And so on for ever all through his "Confessions." On Monica's side, the joy seemed almost more than she could bear. It was not

only that her son was a Christian, but that she foresaw, in every word he uttered, what it would be when a spirit like his was *all for God*. She had the presentiment of all he would become hereafter; and that, to console her for twenty years of anguish, the glorious crown of a saint would encircle the head of her son.

The little room is still shown at Milan where Monica prayed, and the little garden where the last scene was enacted of that great struggle in which Augustine yielded up his will to God.





CHAPTER IV.

 O give himself up more freely to his newly-found happiness, St. Augustine would have liked to have been in some wilderness alone with his mother. Unfortunately, he was overwhelmed with work, for he had to speak in public several times a week, and to continue his course of lectures to his numerous pupils, the preparation for which was long and arduous. This, in his present frame of mind, was a real martyrdom. Indeed, his first thought had been to send in his resignation, and to give up his professorial chair. But it was then towards the end of the month of August. The vacation commenced on September 16; and, after some deliberation, Augustine resolved, in spite of the effort, to remain at his post till then. His failing health and weak voice gave him a pretext for withdrawal at a time not far distant; but one

difficulty had to be surmounted, and that was—*money*. Both he and his mother lived on his classes, and had no other resource but his talents. Fortunately, at this crisis, Romanianus again intervened, and, by his delicate generosity, enabled him to give up his work ; and, when the vacation arrived, to retire into the country. *Vercundus*, a mutual friend, had already offered to lend them his villa called *Cassiacum* ; and thither, in the month of September 386, Monica and her son, with a few chosen friends, established themselves for six months. It was a charming country house, with spacious rooms, a fine library, beautiful baths, wide terraces, luxuriant gardens, and shady trees. Placed on a hill, it commanded on one side a beautiful view of the fertile plains below ; and, on the other, the whole range of the Apennines, on one of the lower spurs of which the house was situated. The summer was nearly over ; but a glorious Italian autumn clothed the trees in orange and red, and shed a soft yet glowing colouring over the whole landscape. It was the very spot and the very season for a torn and struggling spirit to find soothing and rest ; and here Augustine set himself diligently to prepare for holy baptism. *Navigius* was likewise of the party—that suffering, gentle, timid brother of Augustine's, whose whole life was one of silence and prayer ; *Adrodatus*, too,

Augustine's gifted son, whose wonderful genius was only equalled by his purity and innocence ; Alypus, Augustine's chosen friend, and who, like him, was about to receive the washing of regeneration in the Church of Christ; and two favourite pupils of Augustine's, Trigetius and Licentius, the latter being the son of Romanianus, and therefore bound to him by the double ties of love and gratitude. One only was missing, Augustine's bosom friend, Nebridius, who had left home and parents and friends to follow him ; and who, though unable to share in his retreat, was still present in spirit, and preparing himself to meet Augustine at the baptismal font with a heart all inflamed with the love of God. Such was the cradle prepared by Monica's love for the infant soul of her son. She had thought of everything, and chosen only such congenial spirits to share their solitude as should still further kindle the flame of faith and heroism in his heart. She felt, also, a tender affection for each and all of these his chosen companions ; and, with the profound instinct of a saint, foresaw for each a holy and eminent future. "She cared for us as if we were all her children," writes St. Augustine ; "and by her look, as much as by her words, raised our hearts to God." Before leaving Milan, she had asked St. Ambrose's advice as to the best way of preparing her son for holy baptism ; and

Ambrose had recommended, besides solitude and prayer, the earnest study of the Holy Scriptures, and especially of the prophet Isaiah. Augustine followed the route prescribed for him ; but, finding difficulties in the prophet's magnificent conceptions, and fearful lest his reading should degenerate into mere critical study, he opened the Psalms, which had always been Monica's chief comfort. David's may, indeed, be said to be the very voice of prayer, especially of penitential prayer ; and here St. Augustine found all that his heart required. Monica read them with him, and pointed out her favourites ; she threw fresh light on every passage, and opened to him, for the first time, that treasury of knowledge which years of patient suffering had graven in her heart ; but which, to him, in spite of his genius, had been as a sealed book, until the key had been found and opened by her watchful love. At other times, they would hold philosophical conferences ; and into these, Monica's penetration and solid understanding entered with a promptitude and a facility which both amazed and delighted Augustine, who never would permit her to absent herself from them. On one occasion especially, when they had had a little feast to celebrate Augustine's 32nd birthday, the question turned on the aim of the soul. " It can have but one," exclaimed St. Monica, " and

that is to know and love the truth." "Tell me," continued Augustine, "what man can be called really happy? Is it not he who has all he wishes for?" "No," replied Monica, eagerly; "if he wishes for what is good, well; but, if not, even should he obtain it, he would be miserable." "O mother!" exclaimed Augustine, "you have arrived, without knowing it, at the very summit of true philosophy." The discussion continuing, the question was asked, "Who can be said to have God really dwelling in him?" It was answered by one, "That it was he who did God's will;" but Adeodatus replied: "He who has the spirit of purity;" still further pressed, he added: "The chaste soul is one that loves God, and Him alone;" and these pure and noble words finding an echo in Monica's heart, she enlarged upon them with a force and a wisdom which caused Augustine to exclaim, "That in her delicate woman's frame were united the noble faith of a man, the serene wisdom of a sage, the tenderness of a mother, and the fervour of a Christian." Thus to feeble women is often granted a clearness of vision denied to the wise and learned. Thus do love and purity soar to higher flights than genius. And so will it ever be—the knowledge of God comes from the heart. Those will understand Him best who have most loved Him.

The month of April was at hand ; and it was the custom for those who were about to receive at Easter the sacrament of Baptism, to give in their names on Ash-Wednesday, and during the forty days of Lent, to attend regularly the special instructions given in church to the catechumens. Augustine, therefore, quitted Cassiacum with his mother to return to Milan. He might have dispensed with these preparatory catechisings, but he would not. And the beautiful spectacle was daily shown of this man, so eloquent, so famous, so learned, whose knowledge surpassed that of the wisest of his cotemporaries, sitting humbly, like a little child, to receive instruction in the faith, to which he listened with a patience, a modesty, and an attention which amazed all who did not know the secret of his great humility. At last came the much-wished-for moment. According to ancient custom, the vigil of Easter Day had been chosen. Everyone watched that night, and it was after the evening office, and before the mass at dawn, that the sacrament of Baptism was administered. The little church, dedicated at first to St. John the Baptist, and now to the saint whom she received that night in her baptismal font, is still shown to travellers who seek in Milan for traces of a life so strange in its vicissitudes both of nature and grace. The hour having

arrived, Augustine went to the church accompanied by his mother. Every eye was turned on one whose future promised such great things for the Church under whose banner he was now about to enlist for ever. Monica, dressed in her long white robes, bordered with purple, and covered with a veil of the same material, endeavoured in vain to hide the tears of joy which flowed from her eyes.

St. Ambrose arrived, knelt for a few moments in prayer, and the ceremony commenced. Augustine, who was kneeling by the font, rose, and at a sign from the holy bishop, turned towards the east, from whence the light had come which had at last arisen in his soul. Three times he was plunged in the sacred waters, three times he pronounced the profession of faith, “I believe in God, I believe in Jesus Christ, I believe in the Holy Ghost.” After this the bishop mounted the altar steps, and, spreading out his arms, prayed audibly for some moments; and then, on the humble head of St. Augustine, who was smiting his breast, poured the holy water, saying, “I baptise thee in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” and Augustine was born again to God and to the Church. Then, according to the custom of the Church in Milan, St. Ambrose, in a linen garment, knelt before St. Augustine and washed his feet,

after which he dressed him in a long white tunic, as a symbol of the innocence to which he had been restored. It was his mother who had herself woven this tunic, and it was damp with her joyful tears. Then Augustine was given a lighted taper—meet image of that chaste fire which henceforth would consume his soul—and thus he advanced up to the altar to receive for the first time the God who had redeemed him. No picture can give an idea of scenes like these; no words can do justice to the emotions they call forth. It is said that it was at the conclusion of this touching ceremony, that St. Ambrose and St. Augustine together intoned that magnificent “Te Deum,” inspired by the circumstances of the time and place, which will ever remain the most glorious hymn of joy and thanksgiving of the people of God. St. Monica stood wrapt in a happiness too great for speech. The words of Simeon rose to her lips, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word.” Augustine came out of the little chapel as if transfigured—so humble, so detached from human interests, so absorbed in divine love, it was almost impossible to recognise him. All his doubts, his anxieties, his sadnesses, had vanished. One only thought absorbed him—the marvellous mercy of God, which had rescued him from

the abyss into which he had been sunk. But in St. Monica, happiness had developed all the treasures of faith, humility, purity, devotion, and divine love, which, nursed in adversity, required the sunshine of joy to bear their perfect fruit. She had believed in the promises of God, and now it was granted her to see their actual fulfilment. Every prayer had been answered, first for her husband, then for her son. She wished but for one thing more, and that was, to behold the "King in His beauty," and to worship in His presence; and that moment was at hand. An ineffable peace, which passed all understanding, filled her heart. Like a beautiful summer's evening after a storm, when all noise is hushed, and everything breathes silence and repose, so in this evening of Monica's life, all was still; all anxiety, all vague apprehensions were calmed; nothing remained but the unalterable serenity of a heart full of love and of perfect trust in God. Early, she had begun to serve Him. The sorrows of her married life, and of her widowhood, had driven her to cling to Him more closely as to her only hope, her only stay; her very love for her boy was mingled with love to her Lord, for it was to win him to Jesus Christ that she wept and prayed; and now that he was united with his Saviour, the joy was almost more than she could bear. She

had frequently had ecstasies in prayer, that is, moments when God so completely takes possession of a soul as to raise it above every earthly thought or feeling. These ecstasies redoubled after her son's baptism. On the Day of Pentecost, which was fifty days after, she was so overwhelmed with divine favours, as to be unable to take any nourishment for the ensuing day and night. Her thoughts were in heaven, and it was easy to see that she would not long remain on earth.

In former days, wearied with the world, Augustine had made a plan for retiring into some solitude with his chosen friends, and striving, in the search after truth, to find the happiness which they had vainly sought for elsewhere. But the dream was never realised; each clung too fondly to earthly love. Now, however, those great obstacles were removed; and as to Augustine himself, he had vowed that no woman's love, however pure, should henceforth dispute his heart with God. Every one was of the same mind, and thus began the first idea of a religious life which was to produce Augustine's famous and immortal "Rule." The question then arose, Where should they go? But here they had no hesitation. Monica herself, Augustine, Navigius, Adeodatus, Alypus, and all the rest were from Africa, and from the environs of Tagaste. What was there to retain them in Italy? So, towards the end of October,

387, they all started for Ostia, from whence they hoped to find some means of returning to their own country. How unlike were those two journeys! Three years before, they had all come separately; Augustine flying from his mother, and having deceived her; Monica, undeterred by dangers and tempests, following in the wake of her son, and watering her path with what then appeared to be fruitless tears! And now they were come back happy and peaceful, hand in hand, their countenances stamped with a like peace and a like heavenly light.

And Monica herself—how she had opposed the voyage!—how she had prayed to God, in that little chapel of St. Cyprian, that He would prevent her son from leaving Africa! And now she saw clearly that it was from love that God had turned a deaf ear to her prayer; and that untold mercy had been hidden in the very event which had caused her such suffering. Will not this thought make us more ready to give up our will to Him, and to say, “Do, O Lord, as Thou wilt, and when Thou wilt; for Thou knowest all, and lovest us more than all?”

St. Ambrose took leave of the travellers, gave them a last benediction, and, embracing Augustine, prophesied his speedy return. It was St. Cyprian’s Day; Monica, after Holy Communion, appeared more than usually raised above the

thoughts of earth, when, all of a sudden, she exclaimed with a loud voice, "Let us fly to heaven!" Augustine, Adeodatus, and Alypus, hearing the cry, ran to see what was the matter; for she was in general so still and quiet, that any excitement or impetuosity was contrary to her nature; but she could only answer in the words of the Magnificat, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." From that moment the idea of Heaven never left her; not that she had not always that hungering "for a better country" common to all saints; but that until the conversion of Augustine was accomplished, she would have rejected the idea as a sin. But now she had seen the desire of her soul, and was satisfied; there was nothing any longer to detain her here. In passing by Pisa, they went a little out of their way to see a hermitage in the Apennines, inhabited by certain solitaries, who had reproduced in Italy the life of the hermits in the Theban deserts. Before leaving Milan they had likewise visited the religious houses, started or guided by St. Ambrose, in order to gather all the hints they could for their own intended vocation. From thence they came to Civita Vecchia, and here St. Augustine occupied himself with several religious works, and among others, a Treatise on the Trinity. One day, as he was walking up and down the shore, meditat-

ing on this mystery with his mother, they saw a little child, who, having dug a tiny hole in the sand, was filling it with sea-water out of a cockle-shell. Augustine, smiling, asked him whether he thought to empty the whole ocean into it? The child replied, "Why not? It would be easier than to get into your head the incomprehensible ocean of the Holy Trinity!" From Civita Vecchia they went to Rome, and from thence to Ostia, where they hoped to find a vessel to convey them to Africa. Here they were necessarily detained some days; and St. Monica took advantage of the delay to hold still more intimate conversations with her boy on heaven and heavenly things. One lovely evening, when, at an open window, they had been talking for a long time on the joys reserved for the blessed, until both felt, as it were, transported above this earth, St. Monica said, gravely and tenderly, "My son, there is nothing now to keep me here; I had but one object in life, and that was to see you a Christian and a Catholic. God has granted me still more, since you have learned to despise all that the world can give, to follow Him. Why, therefore, should I linger?" And on another occasion, speaking to Alypus and the others on the happiness of exchanging this life for a better, when they asked her "if she did not dread dying so far away from her own

country?" she replied, eagerly; "O, no! one is never far from God; and there is no fear but that in the judgment-day my dust will be found to share in the resurrection." This detachment from earthly thoughts and feelings had only been perfected towards the last; for before, she had been anxious about her burying-place. She had built a vault for herself at Tagaste, alongside of her husband; and had made every arrangement when she left Africa, that, in case of her death, her body should be brought back there. But now she saw clearer—to sleep in Italy or in Africa, what did it matter? Provided that our hearts be eternally united, what does it signify that our dust should rest in the same tomb? Patricius slept in Christ—so would she—so would Augustine a little later; the rest was not worth a thought. Five days after, St. Monica was taken ill with fever, and could not leave her bed: Augustine flattered himself it was the result of the long journey, but she never doubted that her hour was come. A fainting-fit, the consequence of an ecstasy, soon followed; so violent and prolonged, that she was believed to be dead. Opening her eyes, however, after a time, she murmured, "Where am I?" and then turning her loving eyes on her son, said to him, tenderly, "You will have to bury your mother here." At these words, Augustine, overcome by emotion, tried in

vain to restrain his tears. Navigius exclaimed, "Die! and here! Ah! if it were but at home!" Monica looked at him with an expression of gentle reproach, and then, turning to Augustine, said, "You hear what he says: bury my body where you will; do not trouble yourself about it; it is not worth while. All I ask of you is, that you will remember me at the altar of God, in whatever place you may be."

From that moment she was silent, and her whole endeavour was to prepare her soul to meet her God. She suffered terribly, but suffering transfigures some souls. Love was stronger than pain or death; and Augustine, who never left her for an instant, helped her, by his ardent prayers, to pass through the terrible struggle with which Monica was to put off her earthly tabernacle. But a still bitterer sacrifice was reserved for her. For nine days the death-struggle had been going on, and Monica earnestly desired to receive the Holy Viaticum; but the sickness was so incessant, that this supreme consolation was refused her. Holding tightly her crucifix in her hands, she endeavoured to reconcile herself to this terrible deprivation; when a little child came into the room, and, approaching the bed of the dying saint, kissed her on the chest. It was as if He had called her. She at once bowed her head, and, sighing gently, yielded up her spirit to God.

She expired in the month of November 387, being in the sixtieth year of her age.

No sooner had she expired, than Adeodatus, with a bitter cry, threw himself on his grandmother's breast, which he deluged with his tears. Augustine alone could not cry. The news of her death spread through the town, and, as the odour of her sanctity had preceded her, the little room was soon thronged with Christian mourners, weeping, yet praising God for so holy a death. Overwhelmed with grief, yet resolved not to allow his tears to have their course, Augustine followed her body to the church, and returned home again, with dry and burning eyes. But the next morning nature would have its way. When he woke and found his mother gone, when he remembered all her love, all her slave's devotion to him for thirty-three years, his self-control was at an end. "I cried," he writes, "with a violence only equalled by my previous restraint; and sitting on my bed, gave myself up to the luxury of shedding tears for her who had shed so many for me." From that hour till the moment of his death, St. Augustine mourned her in his heart. He never forgot her. Every day he prayed for her. Every morning, according to her dying wish, he made a memento of her at the holy altar. He spoke of her continually, not only to his friends, but even in his sermons. One day,

more than thirty years after, he was preaching against the superstitious idea of the dead reappearing on earth, and in the midst exclaimed: “Ah! the dead do not come back, for had it been possible, there is not a night when I should not have seen my mother; she, who could not live apart from me, and who never left me in all my wanderings. For, God forbid that in a higher state of existence she should cease to love, or that she should not, if she could, have come to console me when I suffer—she who loved me more than words can say!”

But it is still more in his “Confessions” that we see the deep love, the grateful tenderness with which he cherished her memory; it is there that we see what a Christian mother can be—what she may do for her children; and how, when they have been saved by her prayers, she lives again in grateful remembrance in their hearts.

Her death changed Augustine’s plans. Instead of going to Africa he returned to Rome, and remained there a year. The remains of St. Monica had been placed in a stone sarcophagus at Ostia; and there they remained until between the sixth and seventh centuries, when, at the time of the invasion of the Lombards, they were removed secretly to the church of St. Aurea, and buried under the altar in a deep vault, of which the

priests alone knew the secret. Already the fame of her sanctity, acquiring, as it did, greater lustre by the conversion of her son, had spread throughout Italy, and festivals were held in her honour, and hymns were composed in her praise; and in painted glass, and pictures, and frescoes, the most famous events in her life found their meet representation. But it was reserved to Pope Martin V. to place her on the altars of the Church. He empowered his confessor, Peter Assalbizi, one of the hermits of the Order of St. Augustine, to go to Ostia, search for St. Monica's relics, and translate them to Rome. Assalbizi took with him Augustine Favaroni, who died afterwards in odour of sanctity, and a certain number of holy religious; and after fervent prayer they proceeded to dig under the altar of the church. After a long and apparently fruitless search, they came suddenly on a secret chamber or vault, which led into a crypt of some size, and here found several sarcophagi. One contained the body of St. Linus, pope and martyr; another of St. Felix; another of St. Constance; till they came to a large and massive tomb, similar to those in which the Romans buried their dead. They eagerly brought a lamp to read the inscription, and on a strip of lead found engraved the name of "Monica." With joyful, yet trembling hands, they opened the sepulchre, and found the body,

decomposed indeed, but emitting so sweet and indescribable a perfume, that every one was impregnated with it. Hastily placing the precious remains in a wooden coffin, they returned to Rome, and arrived on Palm Sunday. Nothing had been prepared for the solemn translation of the relics; but the people who had assembled in crowds for the feast, seeing the little procession, inquired what it was; and on hearing that it was the body of the mother of St. Augustine, their faith broke forth in joyous acclamations. Every one would see and touch it; and a miracle happened, which confirmed their enthusiasm. A woman pressed through the crowd, bearing in her arms a dying child. The people, touched by her sorrow, and curious as to the result, made way for her. She laid her child on the coffin with an overpowering faith; the child was instantly cured. From that moment the zeal of the people knew no bounds. The sarcophagus was brought the following day from Ostia; and then again miracles followed. The sick were restored to health, the blind received their sight, and that in such numbers, that the Pope attributed it to the special way in which God was pleased to honour the tears of her who had by their means opened the eyes of her son to the truth.

This spontaneous reception of the relics so

touched Martin V., that he determined to preside himself at the extraordinary solemnities which were to commemorate her sepulture in the church where the body had been deposited. After high mass, at which he himself officiated, he pronounced over the relics a most magnificent panegyric, both of the mother and of the son, with an enumeration of the miracles of which all the people had been eye-witnesses, confirming the whole by a solemn bull of canonisation, dated April 27, 1430. He then placed the relics in a beautiful tomb of white marble, enriched with sculptures, the gift of Matteo Veggio di Lodi, reserving only the face, which he enclosed in a crystal reliquary chased with gold, so that to all time her venerable features might be seen, and might speak to the hearts of mothers, with the assurance that God never forsakes those who put their trust in Him.

The concourse of pilgrims necessitating a larger church, Matteo built a wing or side chapel, which he dedicated to St. Monica ; and there the number of mothers who came to pray was so great, that Eugenius IV. instituted a confraternity of Christian mothers under her patronage. But before the end of the century, the devotion increased to such an extent, that a basilica was built on the same site, and dedicated to St. Augustine. On the left is the chapel where, in

an urn of Verd-antique under the altar, rests the body of St. Monica. The following short inscription records the fact—

HIC . JAC . CORPUS . S . MATRIS . MONICAE .

In the same chapel, to the left of the altar, against the wall, is the old tomb of St. Monica. It is a sarcophagus in white stone, with very ancient carving on it. It rests on four lions, and is surmounted by the figure of the saint, in a recumbent position, with long drapery. At the foot of the tomb is the following inscription:—

I.C. Δ. XC.

SEPULCRUM . VBI . B . MONICAE . CORPUS
APUD . OSTIA . TIBERINA . ANNIS . MXLI
JACUIT . DB . IN . EO . EDITA . IN . EJUS .
TRANSLATIONE . MIRACULA . EX
OBSCURO . LOCO . IN . ILLUSTRIOREM
TRANSPONENDUM . FILII . PIENTISS .
CURARENT . ANNO . SALUTIS .
MDLXVI .

On the walls of the chapel, frescoes are painted, commemorating the different events in the life of the saint.

It was at the very time of the completion of this church, that the winds of heresy and infidelity began to blow over the north of Europe. Every Catholic mother was trembling for the soul of her child. It was time that God should send

them some sign of hope. Therefore, St. Monica came out of the shade of eleven centuries, and shone through the storm as the rainbow of consolation. Every day the devotion to her increased. Her feast was celebrated everywhere, and her office inserted in the Roman Breviary. In 1576 Pope Gregory XIII. sent some of her relics to Bologna. Pavia, which possesses the body of St. Augustine, claimed also a portion of his mother's. Treves and Munster had likewise their share. It would be too long to adduce the testimony of numberless great men and saints as to the veneration she has inspired. We will content ourselves with quoting St. François de Sales, that admirable man, whose mission was specially to the hearts of Christian women, and who is never weary of quoting St. Monica as their example and their guide. "Look at St. Monica," he would say to young wives and mothers, "look at her in her household, with her children. Even before Augustine's birth, she dedicated him to the service of God; and, afterwards, so vigorously did she combat the bad inclinations of her boy, that he became even more her child by grace than he had been by nature." Again, to women unhappy in their married lives, he would say: "Bear your trials and troubles, whatever they may be, with the sweetness and resignation of St. Monica; look

at her forbearance, her patience, her silence, her loving gentleness; and learn from her to bear the provoking temper, the cruelty, or the indifference you may meet with, as the Cross which is to bring you nearer to God." But it was especially in the direction of Madame de Chantal that he made use of St. Monica as the pattern for her imitation. Madame de Chantal was left a widow at thirty, with four little children, and a large fortune, and with a strong desire towards perfection. Her inclination led her to prefer above all things the life of a religious.

This wish St. François de Sales thought impossible of realisation, at any rate till her children were older. He wrote to her as follows: "You seek after perfection. Look at St. Monica. Did she leave her boy? And while devoting herself to him, did she not attain to the highest degree of virtue? I give her to you as model and mistress. Have a little patience," he continues; "you have yet much to learn in humility, patience, gentleness of spirit, resignation, simplicity, and charity; imitate St. Monica in all these things, and in the care of the sick and the suffering, and in bearing the daily provocations and contradictions of those around you. Live, my child, with Jesus and with Mary, as Monica did, amidst darkness, and thorns, and desolations, and a brighter day will come, in God's own time

and way." And later, when her boy became wild, and her mother's heart, pierced with anguish and fear, poured itself out in all its sorrow and bitterness into the patient ear of St. François, what was his answer? "Look at your mistress, and read her life. That will console you." Later still, when, after the death of St. François de Sales, the excesses of her son had led to a duel, and she felt that the moment was come when he might die in the wrath of God; that very day, when, prostrate before the altar, she had given vent to her agony in prayers and tears, she heard a voice saying to her, "Read the 8th Book of St. Augustine's Confessions." And she read; and there learnt how her boy might be saved if only she had the faith and courage to immolate herself for him.

From that moment she conceived the tenderest love for St. Monica. She propagated the devotion to her wherever she could; and on her dying bed, begged to have her life read to her. When it came to the passage where St. Monica expressed her willingness to die far away from her home and people, she exclaimed, pressing the hand of Madame de Montmorency, "This is for me!" and so expired; far away from her beloved Annecy, and uniting her will with that of the saint whom St. François had rightly called her "mistress."

But it is especially in this nineteenth century that the example of St. Monica is needed. Among all sad sights, the saddest is one continually presented to our eyes: that of young men without faith, without hope, living and dying without a thought of God or of the future; with rare intelligences, great in human sciences, rich and prosperous according to this world's reckoning, yet utterly foolish and blind, and poor and miserable, if they could see themselves, as one day they will, before the tribunal of the Great Judge; and alongside of these men there are ever mothers, or wives, or sisters, seeing all, feeling all, and breaking their hearts at the sight. On the 1st of May 1850, a certain number of women, perhaps more tried than the rest, met in the Church of Notre Dame de Sion, founded by the venerable Père Ratisbonne, and remembering the words of our Lord, "Where there are two or three gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them," resolved, at the foot of the altar, to recite daily certain prayers for their children, and to meet once a month for the same object. From this humble beginning has sprung a Confraternity, or Association of Christian Mothers, under the patronage of St. Monica, which has spread over the whole of the Catholic world, and received the approval of the Holy Father himself. This is the way

in which all great works in this century have been brought about. If anyone had told the poor little sempstresses of Lyons that the pennies they begged from door to door, for the propagation of the faith, would produce millions, they would have laughed at the idea. Had it been announced to the poor servant, who, in an obscure village of Brittany, founded the order of the "Little Sisters of the Poor," that in ten years their numbers would be almost countless, it would have been received with a like incredulity. It is as if, in this era of wonderful progress, when men are drunk with power, because they have invented railroads and electric telegraphs, and the like, God seemed to find pleasure in confounding their pride by making use of the humblest, and apparently most unlikely means, to attain His great ends.

The Sovereign Pontiff having deigned, by a brief from the Apostolic See, dated 11th March 1856, to raise the Association of Christian Mothers to the dignity of a Confraternity, Monseigneur Sibour, Archbishop of Paris, summoned them to meet him in the Church of Notre Dame de Sion, to announce to them this favour. "Ladies," he exclaimed, "if you wish to become real Christian mothers, fix your eyes on St. Monica; follow in her steps. If you, too, mourn over the wanderings of your sons, do not

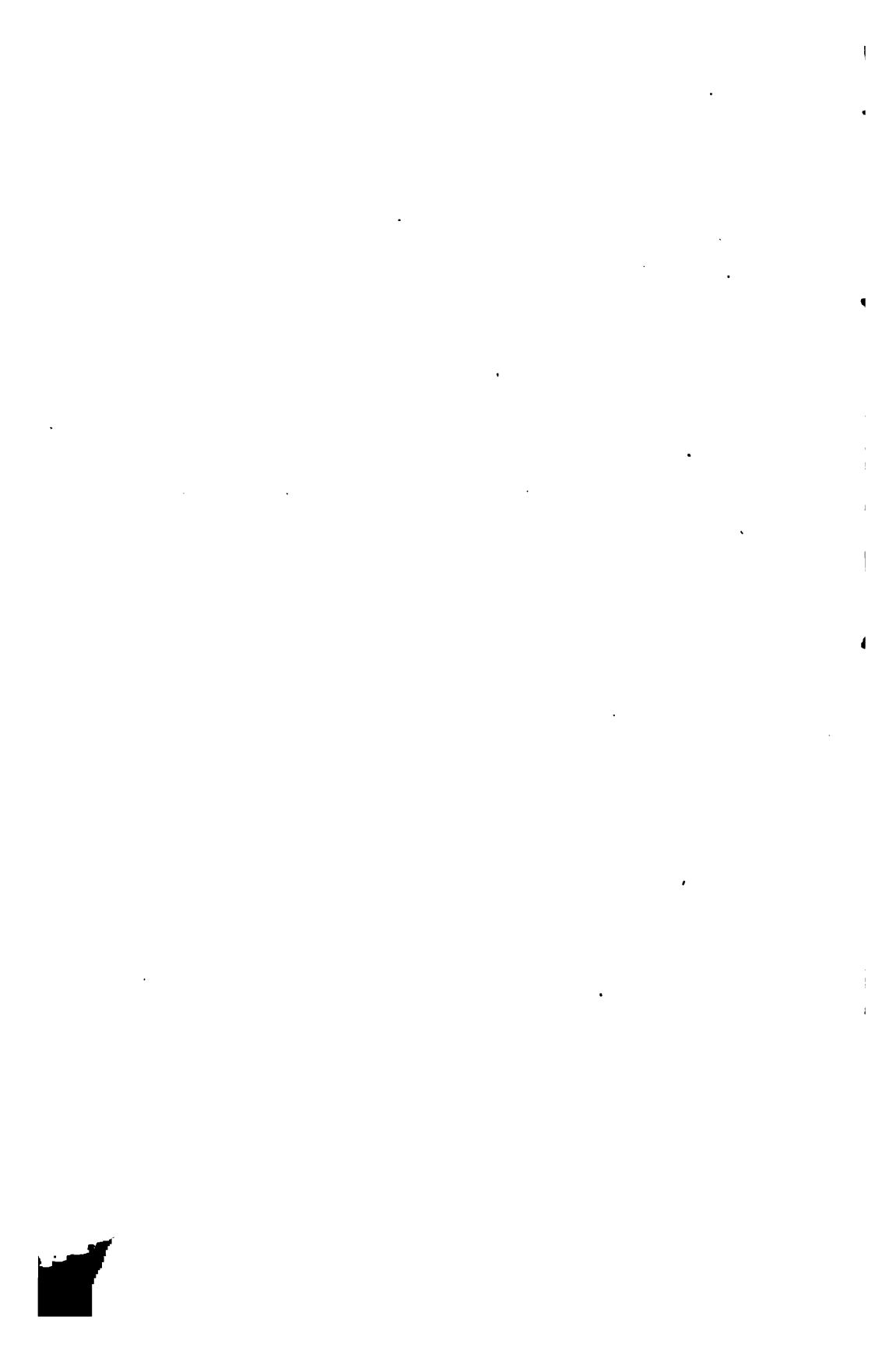
despair. Imitate her: invoke her aid. It is impossible but that she, who suffered so much on earth from the same cause, should not be touched by your sorrows, and obtain for you, in the conversion of your own children, the happiness which she herself received from our Lord. Only persevere; use the means which she used; offer the sacrifice of your prayers, your tears, your penances, for the sins of your boys; so that the day may come when, with your last breath, you will be able to say joyfully with her, 'Why should I stay longer here? *My task is done.*'"

From that hour, the Association has spread rapidly, not only in Europe, but in India, Africa, and America; and everywhere the name of St. Monica is in mothers' hearts and on mothers' lips. Yes, past centuries scarcely knew her; their need was not so great: God left her for us. Better days will arise. He who could not resist the tears of the widow of Nain, will be moved by the sight of thousands of mothers pleading for their children's souls. He will not allow a whole generation of young men to perish, wet with their mothers' tears.

Finish your great work, O Monica! and from the Heaven where you share the glory of the son of whom you were in a double sense the mother, look upon the multitude of women now fulfilling the hard and trying mission once entrusted to

yourself. Sustain them in their trials, that their faith fail not, and teach them, by the example of your life, that the flame of evil, kindled by the enemy of souls in the hearts of their children, can be extinguished by the sacred and more powerful flame of a mother's love.







THE LIFE
OF
MLLE. VICTORINE DE GALARD
TERRAUBE.

DECEASED AT PARIS, IN ODOUR OF SANCTITY,
THE 8TH FEBRUARY 1836.

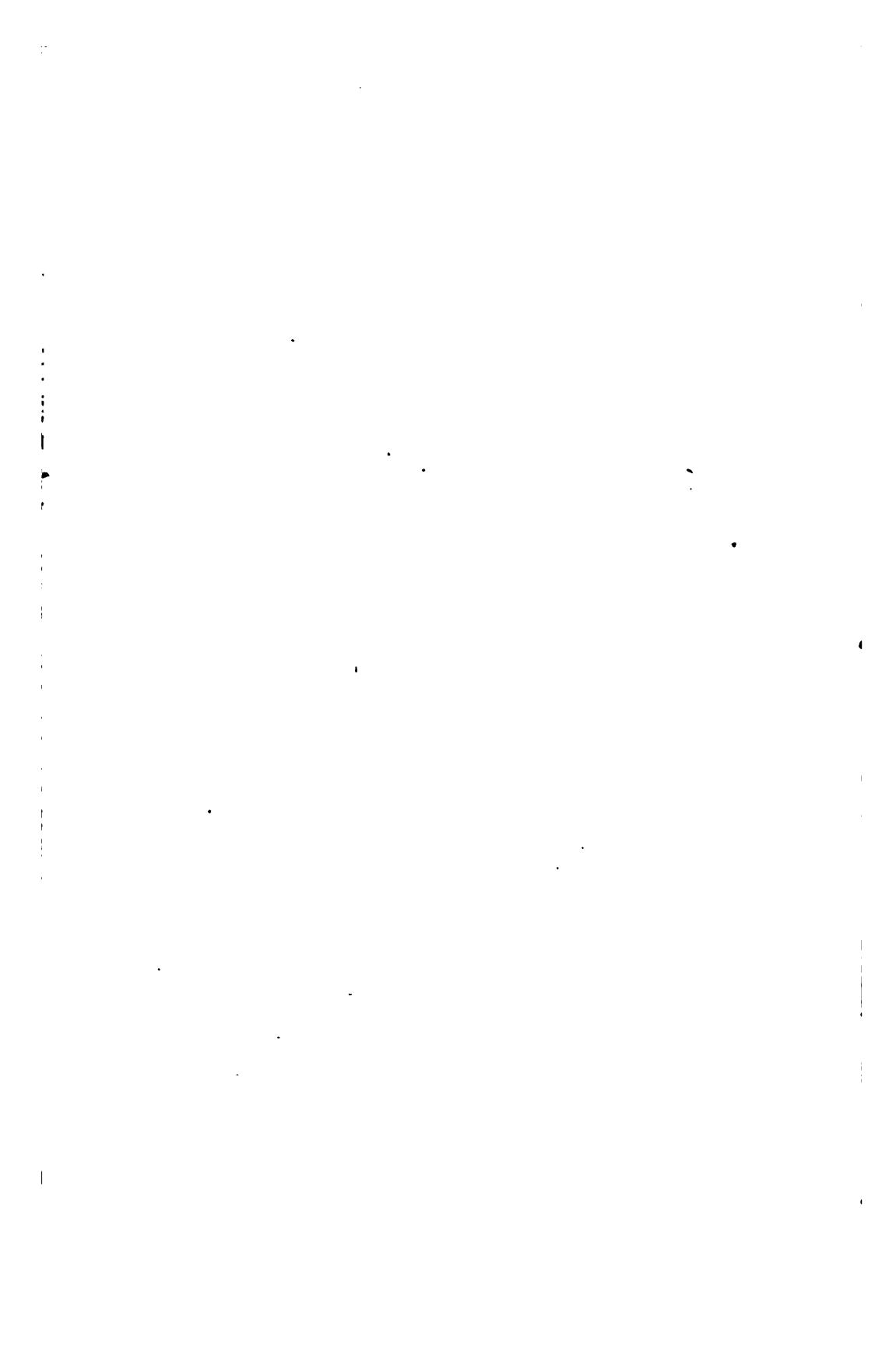






P R E F A C E.

LN this nineteenth century, when, to be brilliant, to be “fast,” and to be admired, seem to be the main objects of English girls; when the style of conversation among themselves is such as to lower, instead of raising, their whole moral tone; and the indiscriminate reading of doubtful popular novels still further vitiates their natural purity and good taste, it has been thought advisable to give a short English version of the life of a young French lady, lately dead: a girl of high birth and station, leading, outwardly, the common life of other girls in a similar position; hoping that some of our young readers may thereby be induced to follow so bright an example.





Life of Victorine de Galard Terraube.

CHAPTER I.

“Qui se humiliat exaltabitur.”—*S. Luke xiv.*

VICTORINE DE GALARD TERRAUBE was the daughter of the Viscount de Galard Terraube, one of the most ancient and distinguished families of Gascony. Her mother was a Mademoiselle de Goulet, a lady of great beauty and piety, who gave birth to Victorine at Lyons on the 16th October 1798.

From her childhood, the little girl was noted for her gentle, loving disposition, for the quickness of her parts, and for the pleasure she seemed to find in all religious exercises. As she was for a long time the only child, every kind of pleasure was invented for her by her parents, whose idol she was; and her mother resolved to entrust to

no one but herself the training and formation of her character. A room was given up to her for her playthings and childish treasures, in which she spent most of the time not occupied by her lessons. To the surprise of her governess, scarcely had she taken possession of this little apartment, when she began, entirely of her own accord, to arrange a tiny altar at one end of it, and before she began to play, she used to kneel there for a few minutes and repeat her childish prayers. Her favourite companion was a little girl, the daughter of an old governess of Mademoiselle de Galard, who was brought up in the house; and no idea of pride, or of the difference in their respective positions, ever marred the happiness of the two children.

Among those who used to come and share their games on holidays, was a disagreeable little girl, the daughter of a neighbour, who, by her peevish disposition, very much tried the patience of her companions. Victorine alone never seemed put out or vexed; and, if the others condemned or said anything against her in her absence, Victorine would instantly find some excuse for her, or contrive to change the conversation. Her spirit of thoughtfulness and recollection was even then remarkable. After one of these children's parties, she would often say to her companion: "If you think we have offended God in any

way this evening, we must try and remember it when we go next to confession."

She was often blamed by her old governess for faults she had not committed; but she never made excuses, as children generally do, or attempted to justify herself. Accepting the reproof in silence, she would redouble her anxiety to please her, and never betrayed the least ill-humour or temper at the injustice. She was eleven years old when, in 1809, a little brother was sent her. But her joy was destined to be soon clouded. He was seized with an illness which baffled the skill of the doctors, and brought him to the very verge of the grave. Victorine redoubled her prayers and tears; she implored "novenas" for his recovery from all her friends; and her faith was rewarded by God in an almost miraculous manner. When every doctor had given him up, the little Hector suddenly and unexpectedly rallied; and his sister was as fervent in her thanksgivings as she had been ardent in her supplications.

The life of a child rarely abounds in striking events, and is chiefly interesting to those around her from the affection which leads father or mother, or both, to watch every indication of character which may point to eminent piety, or to a brilliant future. There is nothing, therefore, to record of our heroine till she was twelve

years old, at which time she made her first Communion. She prepared herself for it with extraordinary sentiments of love and compunction. In a little Journal, discovered after her death, describing her feelings during the three days' retreat, which, as usual in France, preceded this solemn act, the following passage occurs:—"I found that the best day of the retreat was the second; for, during the first, I was trying too much to enter into the spirit of the retreat, and was too full of my own thoughts; and, during the last, the thought of the awful nature of the grace I was about to receive, overpowered me. But on the second I seemed to be able more thoroughly to enter into myself, and form holy resolutions of amendment before God." How few children of that age would thus have realised their spiritual position!

The day so ardently longed for came at last, and on May 31, 1811, she received her first Communion in the church of St. Louis, at Versailles. The bishop administered to her at the same time the sacrament of Confirmation; a double grace, of which she always retained the most thankful remembrance. From this time she showed a greater attention to every duty, a greater watchfulness in overcoming her faults, and a burning charity which made the ill-natured gossip of those around her a subject of positive

pain. Still, it must not be imagined that she was altogether free from faults or temptations. One of her great snares was her excessive love of study. At fourteen she asked for and obtained permission to learn Latin ; and so completely was she absorbed with this study, and with the reading of the classics, that every other occupation became distasteful to her. Her usual visits and walks were neglected. She looked upon everything else as a waste of time ; and even her religious duties became, to a certain degree, irksome. She was awakened from this fit of intellectual pride by reading one day the following passage in the "Imitation :" "Cease from an overweening desire for knowledge ; because many distractions are found therein and much delusion." And the recollection of the two years she had spent in this engrossing pursuit, was ever after a subject of regret and repentance. In 1817, she wrote again in her Journal : "Thou hast enabled me to overcome, O my God, the unhappy passion for study, which was my bane, for it drove me daily further from Thee, and dried up the source of my love towards Thee. I desire to know nothing now but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified." In 1815, Victorine went with her parents into Normandy to spend the summer at the Château de Goulet. She delighted in a country life, not only from her great love of beautiful scenery

and of flowers, but from her intense interest in the poor people, whom she visited with her mother, in the cottages ; and soon after obtained permission to open a school, in which she daily taught the children the elements of their faith. A favourite cousin of hers came at this time to spend six weeks at the château. The impression produced on her mind by Victorine may be judged by the following extract from a letter written by this young lady to a mutual friend :—

“ We are very merry and happy here ; but Victorine astonishes me every day more and more. Clever, brilliant, and pretty as she is, she seems never for one moment to think of herself. What people will say or think of *her*, never crosses her brain. She has not a shadow of vanity, or of self-seeking. Her one thought seems to be how she can best please God and her parents, and labour for the poor. But, by watching her narrowly, I see that she combines this with continual self-denial and mortifications of herself—in her food, in her dress, in every little detail of her daily life. Although quite unconsciously, her words and example have the most powerful effect on everyone around her.”

At this time Victorine drew out for herself a rule of life, which is inserted literally in a note, for the advantage of other girls just come out and placed, like her, in a position where

everything tends to foster vanity and self-indulgence.*

* RULE OF LIFE.

(Drawn out at the age of seventeen.)

1. I will meditate each day on my latter end, on the vanity of earthly things, and on my besetting sins.
2. I will offer up the actions of each day to God.
3. In the course of the day, I will always devote a little time to spiritual reading; the "Imitation" to be my favourite book.
4. At night, I will think of death, of which sleep is the image, and try to imagine the priest at my bedside recommending my departing soul to God. I will say to myself, "Suppose it should be to-night, what should I have most on my conscience?" Make it speak, O my God, with severity.
5. I will try and attend all the Church offices in my power. Keeping my Sundays holy, and free from foolish thoughts and worldly occupations.
6. I will never omit monthly confession; or oftener, should the occasion present itself.
7. Each year, I will try and make a retreat of a few days to renew my baptismal vows and the resolutions taken at the time of my first Communion, and to examine seriously into the state of my soul before God, whether I am advancing, or going back? and if I have made any progress in conquering my natural disposition, and overcoming my daily faults?
8. I will strive to acquire that singleness of heart which sees God alone as the motive of its actions. Knowing how impossible it is to reconcile the maxims of the Gospel with those of the world, I will try and struggle against my natural desire for human approbation. I will try and remember the terrible day, when those who have denied our Lord before men will be denied by Him before His angels. If my fidelity should make me ridiculous in the eyes of worldly people, and expose me to their raillery, I will go and console myself at the foot of the Cross. What joy, if, in however humble a way, I could give some proof of my constancy and love towards our dear Lord.
9. I will be very careful in every action and in every look to maintain that modesty which is recommended to us by the example of the saints. Rather than wear such low dresses as modern taste allows, I would never go out at all.

It was at the end of this year that Victorine first received an offer of marriage from one in every way worthy of her, but she confided to her parents her unalterable resolution to be the spouse of Christ alone; and after several proposals of the same nature, which met with an equally decided refusal, Victorine was allowed to remain in peace.

In the spring the Viscomte de Galard removed to the south of France, for some months, with his family; and in the Château de la Mothe, near Lectour, where Victorine passed the summer with the Comtesse de Beaumont, she had the happiness of finding a chapel in which the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. She had always felt the tenderest devotion to that great Mystery, and her joy was great at being able to visit It many

10. I will obey my parents with promptitude and joy, striving to see Christ Himself in them, and taking for my model the conduct of our blessed Lord to Mary and Joseph. I will try and anticipate their wishes, and never forget them in my prayers.

11. I will avoid everything which savours of singularity or extravagance; practising all hidden virtues, and striving to acquire that gentleness, patience, and evenness of temper which may make my religion attractive to those with whom I live.

12. I will be very careful to avoid uncharitableness or evil-speaking; to try and excuse the faults of the absent, and never to speak of anyone unless I can say some good of them.

13. My greatest happiness is to relieve the poor. Let me, then, in conclusion, daily impose upon myself some privation, in order to be able to give more and do more for the suffering members of Christ. Let me miss no opportunity of consoling them by word and deed; and let me shrink from no personal service to attain this end.

times a day, quietly and without observation, which contributed very much to her growth in personal holiness. At the same time she was very careful not to let her love of dwelling in the tabernacle on the altar interfere with her daily duties. Obliged to live always in the great world and in company, to assist at large dinners and evening parties, she accepted her position with the simple, loving faith which was habitual to her, looking upon it as an act of obedience to her parents, and as thus best fulfilling the will of God, who had placed her where she was. Fearful, however, that her natural vivacity of temperament might incline her to take too much pleasure in this kind of life, she became anxious to impose upon herself a stricter rule, and to practise greater austerities. But her director restrained her zeal, advising her to restrict herself to the duties of common life, and bidding her beware of the spiritual pride which extraordinary penances often engender. She spent the summer, therefore, outwardly, much as other girls do, adding only to her accomplishments that of making artificial flowers, in which she excelled; and this apparently frivolous amusement contributed the following winter to the support of many poor families, whom the distress of 1817 and the incredible dearness of bread, had reduced to the greatest straits. For on their

return to Versailles, the misery was at its height ; and Victorine, having distributed and sold all she possibly could to contribute to their relief, turned her new accomplishment to a definite use, and having obtained orders, not only from her friends but from several commercial houses in France, laboured literally night and day the whole winter, and thus raised a large sum to relieve the wants of the starving people around her. She reproached herself at this time for a certain want of order in her room and among her things, which she felt involved a waste both of time and money ; and set herself vigorously to cure the defect.

In 1817, the old family castle of Terraube, which had been lost to the family in the Revolution of '93, fell again into their hands, and with great joy Victorine found herself, for four consecutive years, living altogether in the country, which her experience of two Paris seasons made her enjoy with still greater zest. The place had been very much neglected, and required both energy and time to put it into good order. The church was equally ruinous and desolate. At the request of the parish priest she undertook the office of sacristan, and at once devoted herself to the repair of the altar linen and vestments, the decoration of the altar, and the remodelling of all the internal fittings of the church. She even undertook to collect from house to house, the

annual tithe paid at harvest-time for the repairs of the fabric ; a task as wearisome as it was often humiliating. But the result repaid her for her trouble. By the time she left Terraube the whole church had been admirably restored ; the high altar was a model of beauty and good taste, and Victorine's success proved what might be done in every other country place, if a similar effort were made, by one of education and influence in the parish, for a like good end.

Victorine at this time, at the request of her father, undertook to give her brother lessons in Latin ; for which, as we have already seen, she was perfectly qualified. So ably did he respond to these instructions that, on their return to Versailles, he took a very high place in his college ; yet this result was not obtained without great perseverance and patience on her part, and the relinquishing of many a favourite pursuit. But her unalterable sweetness of temper, and her affection for her brother, triumphed over all natural repugnance to the task. By a diligent use of her time, she contrived also to establish a little class of young girls to prepare them for their first Communion. A difficulty at first arose from her ignorance of their language, as they spoke a *patois* so peculiar to the district that few could understand it ; but by dint of perseverance and determination, she managed to pick up sufficient sentences for her

purpose, and her ingenious charity suggested to her a thousand ways of interesting them, and of enlisting the help of the older women in the village, who spoke French, to act as her interpreters. She obtained the permission of her parents to invite those who liyed at a great distance from church to come to the Castle on Sundays between the services, so as to keep them out of mischief and give them innocent pleasures.

The poor adored her in all the villages round. Every case of sickness or sorrow found relief in her loving care and tender sympathy. One poor woman, when dying, opened her eyes and exclaimed : " Mademoiselle, I leave you my child !" Victorine looked upon this as a sacred charge ; she placed her with a respectable widow in the same village, and superintended her education herself. Afterwards, with her mother's consent, she apprenticed her in a neighbouring town, and paid for her regularly out of her little savings. The child repaid her loving care, and in 1842, was admitted into the Congregation of the Ladies of the Incarnation in the diocese of Limoges.

The annual *fête* of the village having given rise to many scandals and abuses, Victorine warmly seconded the efforts of the venerable vicar to introduce a better state of things. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed on that day ; and Victorine, not content with passing many hours

before It, and endeavouring by her own penitence to atone for the negligence of others, induced most of the young girls, when not in church, to spend the day with her, and by inventing little games for them in the gardens of the Castle, to while them away from bad company and bad example. Every day witnessed some act of charity on her part, at the cost of some personal sacrifice. Her parents allowed her full liberty to follow the dictates of her loving heart ; and from each meal was reserved the nicest and most tempting food, the ripest fruit, and whatever little delicacy could tempt the appetite of her " dear sick " as she called them, which, the meal over, she hastened to take to them herself. Pages might be written of her life during this time ; but, in her humility, she could see in it afterwards nothing but causes of self-reproach. She accused herself of having sought too much her own gratification, of having been too anxious, too full of self, and of creatures, and not sufficiently detached from human motives and feelings. It might have been imagined that, with dispositions of this kind, Victorine would at once have embraced a religious life. It is true that at seventeen she had serious thoughts of joining the Carmelite Order, to which her love of penance and mortification inclined her ; and that later, her ardent charity decided her to prefer the Sisterhood of St.

Vincent de Paul, provided her director recognised in her a sufficiently decided vocation. But she resolved to do nothing with precipitation. She felt that God had assigned to each of His creatures the post in life for which each was most fitted, and that special graces attend the faithful fulfilment of duty in every position ; therefore, she waited with patience to discern clearly the will of God in the matter. No thought of the comforts and luxuries which she would have to relinquish by embracing the life of continual abnegation and mortification, as a humble “servant of the poor,” weighed with her for one moment ; but she shrank from the thought of leaving her parents, whose consolation and joy she was. At last—wearied with the struggle which had long been going on in her soul—she made up her mind to write to her father, who was at that moment in Paris ; while, at the same time, she opened her whole heart to her mother. Monsieur and Madame de Galard were too earnestly good and Christian to oppose the vocation of their daughter, if it were certain that the call came from God. The following answer from her father will show the loving spirit of their intercourse :—

“ My child, in this case I will neither strive to obtain anything by my influence over you, nor, still less, by any exercise of parental authority.

You desire to know the will of God concerning you, and to follow the path which He has marked out. Well, this is the sole desire also of your mother and of myself. We will seek for nothing else. I know you are ready to break every tie which binds you to your home, and to devote yourself without reserve, with those holy Sisters, to the instruction of orphans and the care of the sick ; that the more painful such a sacrifice would be to your nature, the more anxious you are to make it. But there is another side to the question. I believe that Providence has reserved for you a special mission —that in and around your home there are hundreds of poor and suffering souls to relieve, to cherish, and to support, who, without you, would be left uncared for ; that in the houses of the Sisters of Charity such works are being carried on admirably already without your help, but that there is no one to do your work at home, or to take your place. I believe you can arrive at a higher degree of perfection, and sanctify your soul better, by remaining in the position in which God has placed you, and fulfilling the manifold duties of your station with simplicity and diligence."

A letter from her director, in the same sense, a few days later, confirmed Victorine in the belief that it was not God's will that she should

embrace the religious life ; and although it was not without some sorrow that she gave up her cherished plans, she seems from that moment to have devoted herself, heart and soul, to her home duties, and to have discovered the secret of peace and happiness in an apparently worldly existence ; so true is it, that in every station we may find the way to save our souls, if we accustom ourselves to converse interiorly with God in purity of heart, and in all our actions and desires have only His will and His glory in view.

In the year 1822, Viscomte de Galard having been elected deputy for the Department of Gers, he was obliged to return to Paris, and his family resumed their old habits at Versailles ; but the works of charity of our heroine continued without intermission. "On trouve les pauvres du bon Dieu partout," was her favourite saying ; yet neither here, nor in the Prefecture of Laon, where she spent the autumn with her grandfather, did she allow her religious and charitable duties to interfere with the comfort or pleasure of those around her. By early rising and indefatigable diligence, she contrived to combine her attendance at the Church Offices which were her delight, and the care of the sick poor, with the requirements of the gay society in which she was necessarily thrown. Those who

were disposed to sneer at seeing her hastening every morning to the daily mass, or kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, and who were inclined to criticise and ridicule what they called her “exaggerated” piety, were obliged to own that no one was more cheerful and agreeable in society; no one exerted herself as much, at the great dinners or evening parties of the Prefecture, to contribute to the amusement and pleasure of every one around her. She became a universal favourite among old and young; and, by her extraordinary unselfishness and loving charity, won the hearts of the most worldly of her companions.

In July 1823, her father was appointed by the Marquis de Clermont Tonnerre, Governor of the Royal Naval College, then established at Angoultisne. This new position, entailing, as it did, continual receptions, and an entire loss of the quiet and privacy of their home life, was peculiarly trying to Victorine, whose health was already beginning to fail, although without any decided attack of illness. She resolved, however, to accept it as cheerfully as everything else, and to try and prove to those around her that religion, so far from making its professors gloomy or dismal, contributed more than anything else to the gaiety and evenness of temper for which she was so remarkable. Their house was open

every night, and Victorine devoted herself to helping her mother to entertain their guests, promoting every merry game, playing and singing, whenever asked to do so—though her excessive shyness made this always a painful effort to her—and forgetting herself at all times for the sake of others. Having spent her mornings in church, and in working for and among her poor, she gave up the rest of the day without reserve to the duties of society, only contriving in every possible way to promote among the company the many charitable schemes she had in hand, and interesting them, almost without their perceiving it, in the wants and sorrows of those around them. Yet her submission and obedience to her parents were like those of a little child, and she would not undertake the most trivial thing without their consent. Once she consulted a great friend of hers, the Superior of the Ursuline Convent, about the sale of a gold chain to relieve the urgent need of a poor girl, Victorine having exhausted all her usual resources. “I do not want it at all,” she said, earnestly; “but I do not know whether mama would be displeased at my selling it while she was away.” Her friend advised her not to do so without her permission; on which she exclaimed, “I am sure you are right; but it is so painful to wear so costly a thing when one feels that the price of it would save that poor child!”

This state of existence continued, with few changes, till the year 1830, when, the French Revolution breaking out, the Viscomte de Galard resigned his appointment, and decided to employ his unexpected holiday in making a journey into Italy. The sorrow of Victorine was increased by her failing health, which an accident two years before, when she was thrown out of a carriage, and much shaken and hurt, had seriously impaired. When the moment of departure came, the tears of the poor, and the universal regret for her loss among people of every class, were the most eloquent panegyric which could be written on her seven years' residence among them.

A journey to Italy is one now only too common to people of every class, and of every form of belief; yet few can visit it without receiving some indelible impressions. To Victorine, whose artistic tastes and love of painting had prepared her for great enjoyment and appreciation of everything, was added the intense pleasure of finding herself in a land where the Catholic tradition was unbroken, and where religious festivals, so long discontinued in France, or suppressed by revolutionary influences, were held to be of universal obligation. She arrived at Turin on the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and on entering the Church of

St. Filippo Neri, was at once struck by the crowd of worshippers, the beautiful illumination, and the earnest devotion of the kneeling multitude. The sight of so many Religious Orders also, in their respective dresses, who had been banished from France during the Revolution, and were consequently unknown to her, added to her pleasure. While others sought in each town only the objects of curiosity pointed out in the guide-books, Victorine's first care was to ascertain the religious resources in each, and the principal churches and sanctuaries of interest.

At Turin she found three churches which gave her especial pleasure: that of "Corpus Domini," so called in consequence of the miracle operated in confirmation of the faith in the Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist in 1453, which has given to Turin the appellation of the "Town of the Blessed Sacrament;" of the "Saint Suaire," where that precious relic is religiously preserved; and of "La Consolata," now entrusted to the care of the Oblates, a Congregation of Secular Priests who, by their Missions and Retreats, have so powerfully awakened the dormant faith of the Piedmontese people. Still greater was Victorine's delight at finding Benediction services every evening; and the devotions of the "Quarant' Ore" succeeding each other in the different churches throughout the year.

The richness with which on such occasions each church was decorated, the beauty of the flowers, the blaze of light surrounding the Sacred Host, and the mysterious darkness of the rest of the temple, together with the large number of the faithful who at all hours of the day succeeded one another in silent adoration before the tabernacle—all this filled her heart with a joy and an emotion which to some may appear exaggerated and unnatural: but let those so judge who have not felt it; “*Da amantem et sentiet quod dico.*” Another religious ceremony touched her deeply. It is one which was originally begun in Sicily, in the Dominican Convent of St. Catherine, at Palermo, confirmed by a Bull of Pius VII., under the title of “*Il Giorno di Maria Desolata.*” It consists of following in thought the hours of distress and sorrow passed by the Blessed Virgin from the time of her Divine Son’s death to that of His descent into Hades. It commences at three o’clock in the afternoon of Good Friday, after the “*Tre Ore d’ Agonie,*” and is continued till ten o’clock the following morning. The churches are hung with black, and the Blessed Virgin is represented the size of life, with the body of our Blessed Lord either on her lap or in a tomb below.

But the cold and damp of Turin were unfavourable to Victorine’s delicate chest, and by

the advice of the doctors, they removed her after Easter to the little village of Pignerol, about seven or eight leagues from Turin, situated at the foot of the Alps, and sheltered on the one hand from the cold winds of the mountains, and on the other from the burning heat of the plains below. Here, in her vicinity to the Cathedral, where she daily had the inestimable privilege of receiving the Holy Communion, and in continual labours among the poor around her, several months passed happily away. She became, as usual, the providence of the sick and the suffering ; and when, in October, M. de Galard decided to pass the following winter at Pisa, and so proceed to Rome, the cry of “*Nostra buon madre se ne yà, siamo perduto !*” echoed through the streets of Pignerol.

Let us pause one moment on this episode in her life, and ask ourselves why it is that, among the many English who yearly go abroad to seek for health or enjoyment in a southern climate, so few are found to devote any portion of their time during these winters to the care of the sick and suffering poor around them ? They do it gladly at home ; in their own villages it comes as a matter of course. Why is it, then, that they shrink from doing it abroad ? Is there not everywhere suffering to be relieved, kind and soothing words to be spoken, little and comparatively

costless pleasures to be given, if only the heart be touched with the love of Christ, and the eye be enlightened to see Him in His suffering members? And let not our young country-women imagine that it is difficult or impossible to set about works of this sort abroad. In every place there are Sisters of Charity already established, labouring hard, anxious for more workers, more help, more sympathy. Let them apply to them for advice and guidance: let them put themselves simply and humbly under their direction for an hour or two every day; and they will find that this short time devoted to God's poor, will brighten and sanctify their lives; will give them an aim and a purpose unknown to the desultory pleasure-seekers around them; and that the very dullest residence will become to them at once invested with an interest and a charm which no worldly amusement can afford; while their memory will live in the hearts of the grateful people, and a mutual love will spring up between them which neither time nor distance will efface.

Instead of following the ordinary route to Pisa, our travellers decided to make a little détour in order to visit the two Churches of Mondovi and Savona, so famous for their miracles, and for the pilgrimages of which they are the object. That of Mondovi is situated near the town of that

name. In a valley, formerly deserted, existed a little monument known in the country by the name of "Il Pilone," on which was painted in fresco a picture of the Blessed Virgin. A noted miracle having been operated there in the sixteenth century, a beautiful church was erected over the spot and confided to the care of a Religious Order. This sanctuary soon became famous. St. François de Sales made a pilgrimage to it, as also Pius VII. when exiled to France. Numerous small houses have been built round it for the reception of travellers, and in one of these Victorine and her family spent the night. From Mondovi, they proceeded to Savona, where, in 1536, the Blessed Virgin appeared to a simple peasant named Antoine Bottā, and desired him to go to the Bishop of Savona and appoint a day of fasting and prayer to appease the Divine wrath for the sins of men. Three times the apparition was repeated, and the last time the Blessed Virgin pronounced the words, "Misericordia et non Justitia;" which is the inscription carved on the church built on the site of the miracle. The Blessed Virgin is honoured by the title of "Mother of Mercy" all along the coast; and Victorine looked upon the Communion she had made in the subterranean chapel of that church, as one of the most solemn in her life.

Her time at Pisa was outwardly spent in the

usual way by girls of her age and class ; that is, in studying painting and Italian, reading with her mother, and sharing in the pleasant, quiet society of the place. But her inner life showed a daily increase of piety and union with God. She never missed either her daily Communion or the evening Benediction services, which were her delight : and a Jubilee, granted at that time by Pope Gregory XVI., gave her the opportunity of acquiring fresh graces, of which she was not slow to profit. She amused herself also in translating several little Italian tales and books of devotion into French, for the benefit of her poor children at home, whom she never forgot in her wanderings, and to whom she constantly wrote.

They left Pisa on the 15th April, 1833, and after visiting Sienna and Viterbo, where Victorine had the pleasure of seeing the houses and relics of St. Catherine and St. Rosa, arrived at Rome towards the end of the month.

To a mind and heart like hers, the joy may be conceived of finding herself in that Capital of the World, containing all that is most interesting to the artist and the antiquarian, and still more, the centre of everything most dear to a Catholic.

It would be wearisome to recapitulate all the spiritual comforts and privileges granted to Victorine during this visit. In the glorious Basilicas

of St. Peter, St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and the rest, she was permitted to see all the treasures so precious to the eye of faith. The joy of Communicating in the subterranean Church of St. Peter's over the bodies of the Holy Apostles, and in that of St. Mary Major before the Sacred Manger of Bethlehem, was only equalled by her happiness at being permitted to touch the relics of the Holy Cross, to see the house and prisons of St. Peter and St. Paul, the "Scala Santa," the Pillar of Flagellation, the "Via Crucis" in the Coliseum, the touching mementos in the Catacombs, the relics of St. Agnes, St. Cecilia, St. Francisca di Paula, and a host of other Saints, together with the sanctuaries of St. Ignatius, St. Stanislaus Kotska, St. Louis de Gonzague, St. Filippo Neri, &c. It is enough to say that she was admitted to a participation in all the solemn services of those sacred spots, and from each and all derived fresh strength, fresh joys, and fresh graces. There is no corner of Rome which is not full of deep and overwhelming interest to a Catholic. It is their only real home. Pius V., speaking of the square in front of St. Peter's, exclaimed, "Nullam esse ibi vel minimam soli partem quæ sacro martyrum sanguine non esset imbuta et consecrata." And, as almost all the valuable relics from Jerusalem, Constantinople, Alexandria, and the East, have been at different

periods transferred to Rome, not a day elapses without some beautiful service being performed in the church dedicated to the Saint whose Festival it is, and whose body is there venerated.

Of all these "Fonctions," the one most touching to the heart of Victorine was that of St. Louis de Gonzague, a Saint to whom, from her childhood, she had been devoted, and for whom she had endeavoured to propagate a veneration among all the young with whom she came in contact. The body of this young Saint rests in the Church of St. Ignatius; and in the Chapel of the Roman College, where he made his vows, Victorine received the Holy Communion. A still further pleasure was reserved for her by being able to assist at his Feast on the 21st of June, when crowds of young men and women flock round his altar to receive the Bread of Life; and when parents come from all parts to bring their little ones to his shrine, and to implore his protection for their children's youth and inexperience. The Chapel was beautifully decorated; and the words in the "Little Office" appointed for the day never seemed to Victorine so appropriate: "O dignum Pario vivere marmore, plus illo nimirum marmore candidum, tanti dum tumulus depositi capax, cælorum æmulus micat."

Shortly before this, Victorine had had the gratification of being presented to the Holy Father, and received not only his apostolical benediction, but the expressions of tender and loving benevolence with which he ever deigns to gladden and strengthen his faithful children's hearts. Victorine ventured, at her second reception, to implore certain spiritual favours for one in whom she was deeply interested, and these were granted to her with inexpressible kindness. The Feast of Corpus Christi followed—that magnificent Procession in the Square of St. Peter's, when the Vicar of Christ appears bearing the Sacred Host, borne—kneeling on a dais, on the shoulders of the people, a sight never to be forgotten even by an ordinary spectator; but which, as it were, set a final seal on the indelible and sacred impressions which had been deepening in the heart of Victorine ever since her arrival in Rome. No words can describe that most solemn and touching ceremonial so well as those of our lamented and venerable Cardinal Wiseman in his Life of Pius VII. After a vivid picture of the whole scene, he concludes with the sentence: "The Holy Father felt and was—and you knew him to be—what Moses was on the mountain, face to face, for all the people, with God; the Vicar, with his Supreme Pontiff; the Chief Shepherd, with the Prince of Pastors; the highest and first of living men, with the One Living God."

It had been intended to bring their visit to Rome to a close the day after this great solemnity; but the entreaties of his family induced the Viscomte de Galard to defer their departure till after the Feast of St. Peter. To Victorine this delay gave inexpressible pleasure. Independently of the charms of Rome, she had made many warm friends there, chiefly among the Sisters of Charity and the poor, and those ladies like-minded to herself. Every extra hour spent with them in those holy places she felt was a day gained. On the great Feast of the year at Rome, which is undeniably that of St. Peter, the Pope, as is well known, officiates himself at the High Mass; and it is almost impossible to conceive anything more impressive than the sight of the Successor of St. Peter in that glorious Basilica, surrounded by the pomp which befits this the highest earthly dignity, pronouncing once again the words, “*Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram ædificabo Ecclesiam meam et portæ inferi non prævalebunt adversus eam.*” The prophecy, thereby, seems to be literally fulfilled, and the faith of the most fearful in these troublous times, confirmed. And again in the evening, at the solemn Vespers, what heart does not respond to the words sung by that magnificent Choir? “*O felix Roma! quæ tantorum principum es purpurata pretioso sanguine, non laude tua,*

sed ipsorum meritis, excellis omnem mundi pulchritudinem."

The illumination which followed at night, and, as at Easter-tide, lit up suddenly that glorious dome, exceeded even Victorine's highly-wrought expectations. It was a beautiful finale to their residence in Rome; and three days after saw them sorrowfully passing for the last time out of the Porta del Popolo on their return to France.

They paid a visit on their way home to the "Santa Casa" of Loretto, where they remained two days. Victorine, writing of her impressions of this visit, says: "We had the happiness of receiving the Holy Communion to-day (July 8) in the 'Santa Casa' itself, which is a rare privilege; and at the foot of the altar, I was permitted to make the vow of virginity to Christ, which I had so long and so earnestly desired. The High Mass was sung for the Octave of the Visitation, and when I heard the words, 'Surge, propera, amica mea, columba mea, formosa mea, et veni,' I felt as if the Blessed Virgin herself were inspiring and sanctioning my consecration to her Divine Son as His spouse." Her humility, however, concealed the fact of her vow; and to one person only was it known until, at her death, this memorandum was found among her papers.

At Bologna she had the satisfaction of venerating the relics of St. Dominic and of St.

Catherine de Vigry, that poor Clare whose tender devotion to the infancy of our Divine Lord was rewarded one Christmas night by a visible demonstration of His presence.

Circumstances delayed for a year the return of M. de Galard and his family to their native land; and they spent the time in their old house at Pignerol, where the people welcomed them back with enthusiastic expressions of attachment. Victorine rejoiced at the quiet which enabled her to look back on the past year, so full of marvellous graces and exceptional favours, and to examine herself as to the fruit which such privileges had borne in her soul. Her Journal at this time abounds with expressions of humility and compunction, and with ardent resolutions for the future. Unconscious though she herself was of her spiritual progress, it was most marked to those around her. She seemed every day to be more holy, more devout, more detached from self and from creatures. She could exclaim with St. Thomas Aquinas, "No other do I desire but Thyself, O Lord!—Deus meus et omnia."

It was the end of September, 1834, before political events enabled them to return to Paris; and the very first Sunday the sight of the open shops and the neglect of the churches, then so universal in France, filled Victorine with sorrow and regret for the beautiful land of Italy, where

she had spent four such happy years, and where everything had tended to strengthen her ardent piety and enkindle the burning love of her Lord.

But she was not of a character to waste her time in fruitless regrets. In France was her work ; in France lay her daily duties ; and she determined to devote herself to them to the utmost. Persuaded of the truth of St. Bernard's maxim, "Qui regulâ vivit, Deo vivit," she drew out a new plan of life in harmony with the duties of her actual position ; so that while consecrating the early hours of the day to God and his poor, she neglected no occupation agreeable to her parents, and none of the little duties which her position in society required of her. She had that true Christian courtesy which is the only real civility, and which ennobles the most trivial action in the intercourse of daily life. By the world in general she was looked upon as a very agreeable, pleasing, pretty girl, always ready to oblige everybody, full of talent and wit, and the greatest possible comfort to her family ; but it was reserved to few the knowledge of the real self, which lay hidden from almost all eyes but those of Him, whose she was and whom she sought to serve. One or two congenial souls, however, who watched her narrowly, wrote after her death to her mother in the following terms : "I was talking about Victorine the other day

to Madame de —, and she agreed with me that she never could forget the expression of her face after receiving the Holy Communion, or when kneeling before an Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It was not only fervour, it was ecstasy ; her whole expression beamed with joy, even after leaving the church for some little time, so that I always knew *where she had been*. Once she went with me into the country, where the church was closed. She could not conceal her sadness. ‘ How our dear Lord is abandoned here ! ’ she exclaimed : ‘ Could we not find some means to approach Him a little nearer ? ’ I consented, on condition that for my sake she would make her meditation out loud. She tried to excuse herself ; I insisted, and, as I had the key, she yielded, and we went in. As soon as she saw the *little light* which spoke of the Presence, the whole expression of her face changed. She knelt : and in a low voice, according to my request, began speaking of the love of Christ, who had given Himself for us ; but putting it in so new a light, and dwelling on it with so much unction, that I was both awed and astonished. Suddenly she stopped ; and I, feeling myself utterly unworthy to remain and trouble a union so close as that which evidently existed between her and her Beloved, left the church and her in it. When she came out, though she said nothing, her face

had that joyous, satisfied look which had far more of heaven in it than of earth."

It was about a year after Victorine's return to Paris when, in the beginning of December, 1835, her family became alarmed at a nasty wearing cough, which came without any apparent cold, and which caused great oppression and difficulty in breathing. She never complained; but her weakness increased, and talking seemed to fatigue her very much. She rarely went out except to the early Communion, and on Christmas Day was so exhausted after the Low Mass that she could not remain for the rest of the services—a disappointment to which she resigned herself with her usual sweetness and submission to the will of God. The last time she was able to go to church was on January 6, the day of the Epiphany. From that day a low fever rapidly consumed her strength, and she was soon only able to get up for a few hours each day. The most eminent doctors were consulted in vain. She had been really in failing health for years, and her constitution had been undermined, insensibly but surely, so that every effort for her recovery failed. She supported all the various experiments to this end with a courage and a patience which amazed those around her. Although convinced that the remedies tried were useless, she submitted to them all without a

murmur or a remonstrance. The only privation which she felt to be almost intolerable was that of the holy communion ; but her kind director, knowing her feelings, after a few days procured for her that inestimable privilege. Now also she felt the advantage of the habits of regularity in her religious exercises which she had so long practised, and which enabled her without difficulty to unite herself daily with the holy sacrifice, and to keep to her usual times of prayer and meditation. Her mother once asked her “ if it did not tire her too much.” She replied, “ Oh, no, dear mamma ! it is not my head but my heart that speaks then.” This state of things lasted for about a month. It was Sexagesima Sunday, when suddenly, at twelve o’clock, Madame de Galard was alarmed by a great change and an increased difficulty in Victorine’s breathing. She sent for the doctors, who gave no hope ; and then summoned her child’s confessor, and asked him to prepare her for the solemn change. “ You may be free from anxiety on that point, dear madam,” he replied ; “ I have only to say to her, ‘ You are about to leave us for Heaven,’ and I feel sure that the calm and peace of that pure soul will not be for a moment impaired.” He went at once into her room, and about a quarter of an hour after, came out, having announced the great and coming change, heard her last confession,

and prepared her to receive the last Sacraments of the Church. Like the wise virgins, Victorine had always kept her lamp trimmed and ready for her Master's call, so that His minister had only to address to her the consoling words, "Ecce sponsus venit, exite obviam ei." The poor mother hastened back to her child's bedside. "Mamma," she exclaimed, "Monsieur l'Abbé has just offered to bring me the Holy Viaticum and, at the same time, extreme unction. I am so glad!" Then turning to her brother, she begged him to read to her the vesper service for the day, the time for which was at hand. But the fatal hour was approaching with rapid strides, and Madame de Galard felt that the moment for administering the last Sacraments could no longer safely be deferred. She spoke to Victorine, who, with a gentle smile, thanked her and said, "Let everything be very reverently prepared." At four o'clock the priest arrived, bearing the sacred host. Victorine answered the usual questions with calmness, and was able to join in all the prayers, and unite herself with fervent love and joy to Him who was so soon to be her eternal reward. M. de Galard had been confined to his bed for two days with an inflammatory attack, which prevented his being present at this touching ceremony. He got up that evening, however, if only to embrace once more

his dying child. Victorine received him with eager affection, tenderly inquiring after his health; and then added, “Papa, we have had grand doings here!” M. de Galard, in a voice broken by emotion, expressed the hope “that it had not tired her too much.” She replied, gaily, “Tired? Oh, no! It *rested* me, and did me nothing but good.” At eight o’clock one of the nursing sisters of the order of the “Bon Secours,” who had tenderly watched over her during her illness, took leave of her to give up her place to her companion, saying, “Good-bye, dear Mademoiselle, till to-morrow.” She replied, smiling, “Till to-morrow? *Ab! I don’t know about that.*” During those hours of anxious watching on the part of those around her, she never once lost her calm and presence of mind. Once the sister presented her with a favourite little picture of the infant Jesus; she kissed it and pressed it to her heart; her mother made some allusion to *Notre Dame de Savone*; Victorine directly exclaimed, “*Misericordia et non justitia.*” Towards evening she seemed so much better, that the nursing sister thought there was no fear of any sudden change, and persuaded her mother and brother to go and lie down for a few hours, promising to call them the instant she perceived any alteration. Thus Victorine was left undisturbed during those last few hours, which she

passed almost entirely in prayer. At two o'clock she took up a little crucifix, which the Holy Father had indulged for her for the hour of death, and kissed it fervently several times. Half an hour after, the sister said to her, "You will soon see Him whom you have loved." She replied, with an expression of intense joy, "O yes! very, very soon." The sister added, "You will pray for me then, will you not?" She answered with calmness, "Yes, I will pray for you and for all; I will not forget any one." It was only three o'clock; she thought it was seven, and asked for her Missal, that she might, as usual, read the mass for the day; the book fell from her hand. The sister hurriedly called her mother and family, and commenced the prayers for those in their last agony. A few minutes later she breathed one long sigh, and all was over.

It was on the 8th February, 1836, that this pure and loving spirit returned to its Maker. The sisters who had so tenderly nursed her, watched by her mortal remains, and all who approached them were equally impressed with the expression of marvellous peace and joy stamped on the features. They felt it almost impossible to pray for her; rather were the watchers moved to invoke her protection and her prayers. On the 10th February, at ten o'clock in the morning, the body was removed to the church of the

“Missions Etrangères,” escorted by twenty-four young girls of the orphanage of La Providence; by the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, and by an immense crowd of sorrowing friends and relations. After the Mass, the funeral procession proceeded to the cemetery of Mont Valérien, where, so many years before, Victorine had expressed a wish to be interred. During this time a curious thing occurred at Angoulême, the accuracy of which was attested by the bishop and several of the most eminent of the ecclesiastical authorities of that town. The night that Victorine died, one of the sisters of the Ursuline Convent, who was a great friend of hers, being asleep, saw Victorine by her bedside, dressed in white and surrounded by a number of young girls. Her expression of intense joy struck the sister, who asked her where she was going. Victorine replied, “To the Feast of the Great King; very soon you will know all about it.” The sister woke with the conviction that Victorine was dead and in heaven; and so strong was the impression on her mind that she directly told the superior and the other religious of her dream, which the news, two or three days later, confirmed. The vicar-general thought that the facts deserved an official notice, and signed a declaration to that effect, after a careful inquiry into all the circumstances of the case.

The sorrow at this unexpected death was as heartfelt as it was universal. From the Holy Father himself, who, when he heard the news, exclaimed : " *Ci dispiace pei parenti, ma speriamo che pregherà per noi !*" down to the humblest priest who had seen her in her daily life and amid her many works of mercy, all bore the same touching testimony to the noble life and widespread influence of this young girl, who had found in the ordinary path of her age and sex the way to sanctify not only her own soul, but a multitude of those who were thrown in contact with her. Her father did not long survive her loss. Two years later he followed his child to her early grave, after only a few days' illness : and her mother, finding that the cemetery of Mont Valérien was about to be converted into a fortification, resolved to remove the mortal remains of both her husband and child to the cemetery of the cathedral of Versailles.

The body of Victorine was exhumed ; it was found intact. Not the slightest decay was perceptible. It was then put in a leaden coffin and removed to Versailles, where both bodies were received by the vicar and clergy of the cathedral at the principal gate. The church presented a touching spectacle ; the merchants, artisans, and poor for whom Victorine had so long laboured, the sisters of St. Vincent de Paul with whom

she had worked, the orphans and widows whom her charity had relieved, all thronged to pray and weep by the side of those two biers which recalled so many loving memories. Two little monuments surrounded by a low iron railing cover the mortal remains of those so justly beloved, and on the grave of Victorine the following words are inscribed :

HERE LIES VICTORINE DE GALARD TERRAUBE,
THE TENDEREST OF DAUGHTERS AND OF SISTERS,
THE FRIEND OF ALL WHO SUFFERED,
THE MODEL OF ALL VIRTUE.
SHE LIVED BUT FOR GOD,
AND WENT TO RECEIVE THE VIRGIN'S CROWN
FROM THE HANDS OF HER DIVINE SPOUSE,
ON THE 8TH FEBRUARY 1836.

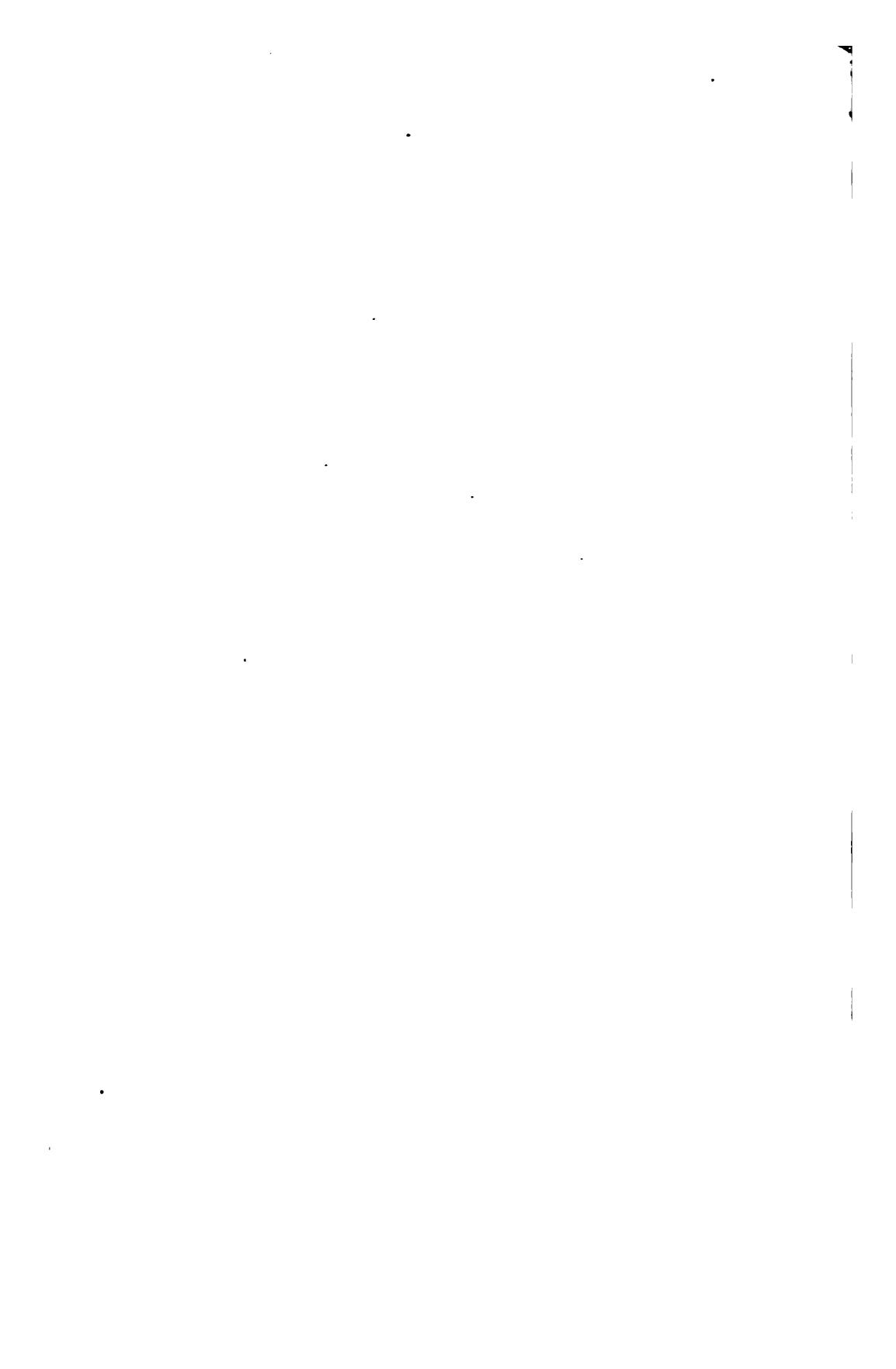
VENI. SPONSA MEA . . . ; VENI, CORONABERIS.
Cant. iv. 8.

Our task is done. Our object has been to show how possible it is for a girl placed in a high position, and in the midst of the temptations and fascinations which surround her in the world, to lead an inner life of the greatest personal holiness, and of continual recollection of the presence of God. In beauty, in cleverness, in accomplishments, in classical and other knowledge, Victorine surpassed most of those of her age and sex. She was the light and life of her home, and neglected no study or employment which could make her useful or agreeable to those around her.

But the secret of her life lay in the *motive* which directed all her actions. The glory of God and the good of His creatures, these were her sole end and aim. We have dwelt on her faith, her charity, her tender devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, her profound humility, her spirit of prayer, her loving obedience to her parents, her purity of intention—above all, *her total self-abnegation*. This was the keynote of her life—to spend and be spent for others, to suffer for Christ and for His poor; this it was which made her exclaim, with St. John of the Cross, “Domine Jesu! pati et contemni pro Te!” filling her whole heart with that burning charity which left no place for thought of self. And this young girl, in the punctual and diligent performance of her daily duties in her quiet home life, has taught us three great lessons:—First, that, in the words of the Archbishop of Westminster, “the busiest life may be a life of prayer; perpetual toil need bring no hindrance to the union of the will with God.” Secondly, that in proportion to our own union with God will be our influence for good over the souls of others. And lastly, that our circumstances and position can be no excuse for a worldly life or a lukewarm profession of our faith. God has placed us where we are, and will give us special graces to meet each special difficulty, if we will only seek them aright.

Sometimes, on looking round our drawing-rooms, we are tempted to ask: "What have become of the modest, gentle, pious English girls, who, in old times, distinguished us from other nations?" Can none be found, who, reading this simple life, will ask themselves with St. Augustine: "Why cannot we do that which another has done?" Is it that, with the loss of faith, has vanished likewise that "meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price;" that habits of self-indulgence have replaced those of self-denial, and that young girls are now thrown into a vortex of pleasure and gaiety, unchecked by the gentle and warning voice which, of old, called them weekly to self-examination and watchfulness, to penitence and prayer?

May the day be not far distant when English girls will look back upon this era of so-called independence, and vanity, and self-seeking, and pride, as of a time calling forth only remembrances of sorrow and shame; and may they return to the good old paths of loving, dutiful submission, modesty, and reserve, which won from an old French writer three centuries ago the encomium: "Dans cette île, dite 'des Saints,' on trouve, même dans le plus haut rang, des perles de jeunes filles, qui, comme les violettes, répandent partout le parfum de leurs bonnes œuvres, *sans se laisser découvrir.*"

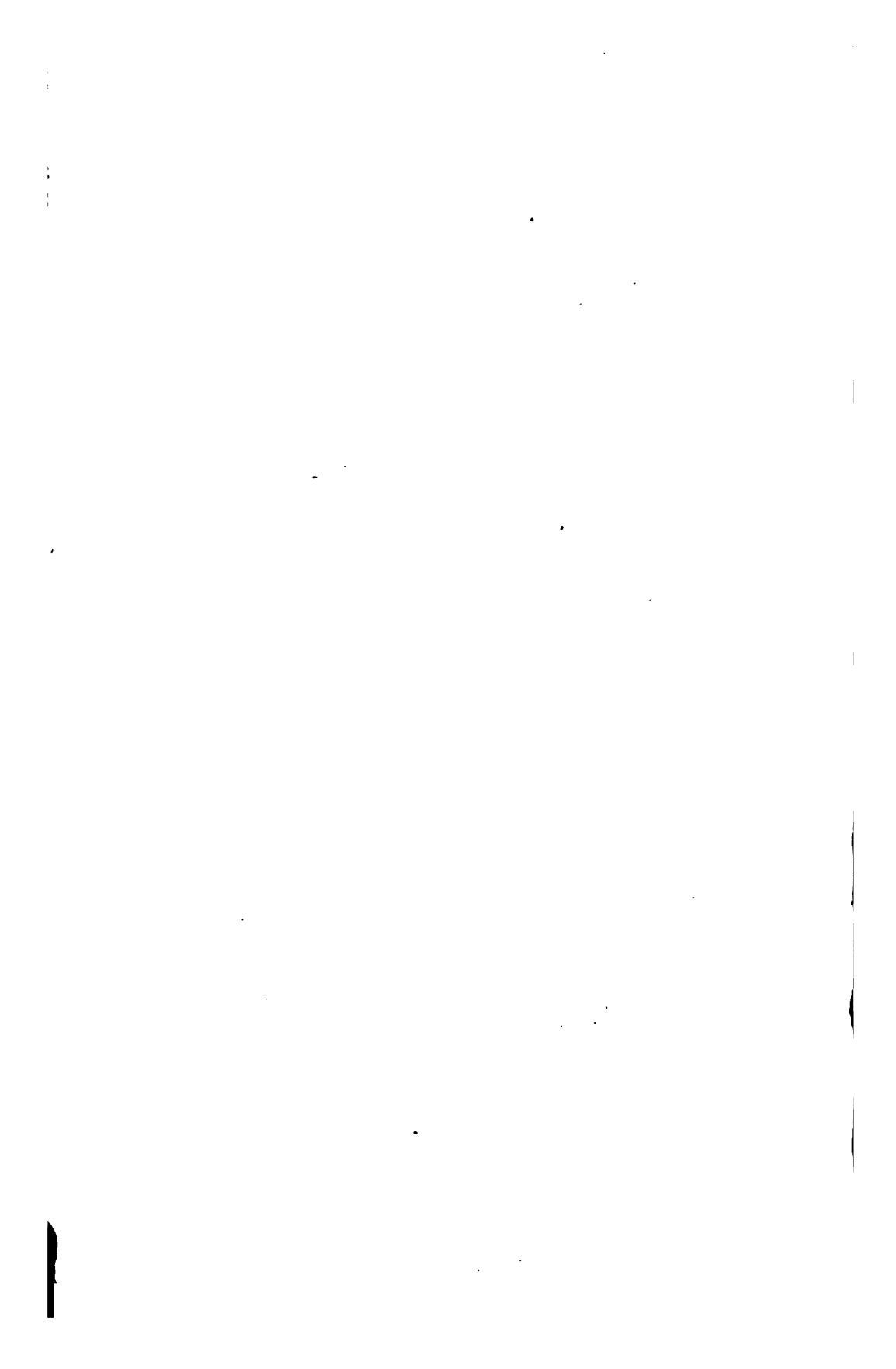




THE LIFE
OF THE
VENERABLE MERE DEVOS,
SUPERIOR OF THE SOCIETY OF SISTERS OF
CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL.

DECEASED AT PARIS 27TH MARCH 1860.







Preface.

OF all the noble Religious Orders which form the glory and the strength of the Catholic Church, none is so universally appreciated as that of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Numbering at the present time more than nineteen thousand, without counting the hundreds of affiliated sisters (i.e. women whom the ties of family life compel to remain in the world, but who, in their respective spheres, are bound by vow to work with them and for them to the utmost of their power), they are spread over every part of the known world; and everywhere their steps are hailed with thankfulness and joy. But numerous as they are, they are not nearly sufficient for the demand. Every week the Superior at Paris has the pain of refusing, for

want of sisters, the applications which come from all quarters imploring their aid. It seems strange that, whether deterred by the severity of the Novitiate, or by the fact that there are no *lay* sisters in the Community, so that all household work is shared amongst them, so few English ladies have as yet volunteered to join this noble band. Yet in no country is practical work so appreciated as in England, and nowhere are there so large a body of unmarried and unemployed women who might be enlisted in this glorious service.

To give them a clearer insight into the nature of the work and the rules of the Community, this Life has been translated; describing, as it does, a lady known to the writer, and venerated by her in common with all who had the privilege of being her sisters, as a model of all that was most perfect in her holy vocation; and as a proof of the superiority of united work over individual efforts; in the earnest hopes that some who read it may be induced to follow in her steps.





Life of The Venerable Mère Dévos.

CHAPTER I.

“ Alter alterius onera portate, et sic adimplebitis legem Christi.”
Gal. vi.



UGUSTINE EULALIE DEVOS was born at Comines, a town in the North of France, the 3rd August 1803. Her mother was a woman of great piety, and chose a Saint to be the godmother of her child. This lady, whose name is still held in veneration among her countrywomen, devoted herself to inspire sentiments of charity and tenderness for the poor in the heart of her goddaughter. From a very early age, the little Eulalie showed an unusual spirit of devotion, recollection, and silence. Her greatest joy was to pray before the Blessed Sacrament. “Have you been very good to-day?” used to ask her godmother when she came to

her mother's house. "Mamma says yes," replied the child. "Then I will take you with me to church," was the reply; and the little thing used to jump for joy on the road. Although the fifth child in the family, she was the guardian angel of her brothers and sisters, settling all little disputes between them, and, by her wonderful unselfishness and loving ways, always bringing peace and brightness wherever she went. It happened occasionally that she was blamed by her parents or her governess for faults committed by the others. She would accept the reproach and even the punishment in silence, never allowing herself to make the smallest excuse or say a word in her own defence. Her brothers and sisters called her often "the Saint," not in derision, but with a keen appreciation of a something in her which they did not possess themselves.

But it was after her first communion that these happy dispositions seemed to be developed and perfected in her soul. Her great friend was a young girl about her own age, who has since died in the odour of sanctity, and all their holidays and leisure hours were spent together in reading the lives of the saints and forming plans for the future to walk in their steps. Her parents left her fully at liberty to follow the dictates of her heart as regards the poor. Already "the love of

Christ constrained her" to invent every kind of plan for their relief. She enrolled herself in the Association of Ladies of Charity connected with St. Vincent de Paul at Comines, and her greatest delight was to carry soup and succour of all kinds to her "dear poor," whom very soon she was to call "her masters." She started a class of indigent children, whom she assembled out of the streets on Sundays and Feast days, and by her winning and loving manner induced them to remain around her, while she instructed them in the elements of their Faith. Often when she was urged to take some rest, or join in some amusement with her companions, she would plead to be left alone, adding, "You will let me go to Benediction, I know, in the evening; that is my real recreation." The Benediction service was given every evening at Comines, and already the love of Jesus in His Tabernacle filled her whole heart with joy. Her companions still speak of the expression of her face when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and the earnest devotion displayed by her attitude of love and adoration. A visit she soon after paid to the House of the Sisters of Charity decided her vocation; and at sixteen she presented herself to the Superior of the Hospital at Lille, and implored for admission into the Community. Her extreme youth, however,

made her parents resolve to prove the reality of her vocation by a delay of two years; but finding her more and more resolved as time went on, they reluctantly gave their consent, and at eighteen she entered on her novitiate, offering up to God the first-fruits of her life of innocence and purity, and a will already dead to itself and living but by obedience. It was on the 12th September 1821, that Eulalie commenced her life in the seminary, during the Octave of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, whose love and whose fidelity she was so closely to imitate. From the first moment, she was remarkable for the same qualities which rendered her later life one of such rare example to her sisters. Always calm, recollected, gentle, and obliging, never omitting a single duty, and anticipating the slightest wish of her superiors, she was equally noted for her wonderful self-abnegation, the mortification of her senses, and her continual recollection of the presence of God. The exercises of the Novitiate left their impress on her whole future life, and thoroughly imbued her with the spirit of humility, obedience, simplicity, and invariable attachment to the Rule which form the perfection of a Religious.

It was in this spirit that she took the Habit of the Order of the Sisters of Charity, and soon after went to the post assigned to her in the little

House of Rosny. One of her companions, in speaking of her at this time, writes :—

“ I shall never forget the impression the Sœur Vincent (that was the name she took with the Habit) made upon me during the time we spent at Rosny. We found a house which was almost uninhabitable ; and in the confusion which always attends new foundations, where nothing is yet organised, one must submit to every kind of privation. To one fresh from the Seminary, this position is doubly painful ; but Sister Vincent only found in it an occasion for the exercise of greater humility and self-denial. Her courage astonished us all. She always chose the most humiliating offices, the most uncomfortable place, the worst food. If there were a question of any amusement or pleasure, an agreeable walk, or the like, she always so contrived that the others should have the turn, and she herself be left out. She never forgave herself the slightest fault ; the least emotion of self-esteem, a hasty word or action, was enough to make her fall on her knees to the Superior and ask her pardon. The whole of her life was contained in these two words, “ *charity* and *sacrifice*.” It was impossible not to be struck with her perfect modesty, her cordial, loving manner, and her wonderful spirit of recollection. At first she was appointed to the superintendence of the classes, afterwards of the work-room. Her

influence over the children was perfectly astonishing. She succeeded in subduing the most rebel natures, and compelling them, by the very force of her love, to follow and obey her. The chapel, the linen, and the dormitory, were committed to her care. She worked incessantly, but without ever interrupting her mental prayer. In the evening she used to be sent to read prayers in the wards of the hospital, and to dress the wounds of the sick. There she was in her element; and the overflowing charity of her heart shone in her face as she approached their beds of suffering. Our sister-Superior admired her as much as we all did, but thought it necessary for her health to insist on her taking some rest in the morning. This was a real trial to her ardent soul, which sighed for continual communion with God. Once or twice she could not resist the desire to kneel and pray behind the curtains of her bed; which, the superior discovering, reproved her severely, and mortified her without remission for a long time, in order to put her humility and patience to the test. She bore it well; for when the time came for her to receive the last sacred vows, the same superior asked for this grace '*for one in whom she could detect neither fault, nor even imperfection!*' I used specially to admire in her that union of the character of Martha and of Mary—always at her post, always in her work,

and yet always with her heart fixed on things above."

But their time of peace and tranquillity at Rosny was destined to be of short duration. The Revolution broke out in July 1830; and one day 7,000 men from Rouen—most of them escaped convicts—were seen approaching the Convent with the determination to pillage its contents. The superior caused a plentiful meal to be prepared for them in the court-yard, hoping thereby to divert their attention; and, in the meantime, Sister Vincent, kneeling in the refectory, of which the window looked on the high road by which they were approaching, poured out her whole soul in prayer for safety. Her faith and fervour met with their reward. By some (to them) unaccountable accident, the insurgents took the wrong turn in the road, and never found out their mistake till they arrived at St. Germain en Laye, too late to retrace their steps. The sisters united in a joyful "Te Deum," while ascribing their preservation to her who by her piety had called forth this special interposition in their favour. The order to return to the Maison Mère soon followed. It was a great sorrow to Sister Vincent to leave the children and young girls whom her instructions were leading to Heaven, and the tears of the children, and of their parents, bore witness to the way in which

her work had been appreciated ; but she herself controlled all expressions of sorrow ; it was only by an increased paleness that her companions could detect the suffering which she had learned to concentrate within herself, while, with the dignified calm of manner which was habitual to her, she submitted herself unreservedly to the mysterious designs of Providence.

The few days' rest in Paris, Sister Vincent looked upon as a signal favour of God. "Let us go and refresh ourselves once more at the fountain-head!" she exclaimed, to her sisters. Thus was she ever ready to make the most of the present, to lose no opportunity of sanctification, and yet to be always prepared to go where obedience sent her, without a thought for the future, in simple dependence on the will of God.

The next scene of her labours was the Hospital of St. Léon at Bayonne, which had been lately put under the care of the Sisters of Charity. The journey at that time was long and fatiguing, taking eight days from Paris ; but as her biographer expresses it, "She sought for and found God everywhere, so that no outward circumstances disturbed her inward peace." The sisters were received by the people of Bayonne with great joy, and the venerable archbishop congratulated himself on their arrival in his diocese. The

hospital itself was, however, in a miserable state ; the patients had been entrusted to the care of one or two incapable servants, especially of one old woman, who looked upon the sisters as intruders sent to deprive her of her place. Sister Vincent interceded with the authorities and obtained permission to retain her in the hospital, giving her such light employments as were suited to her age. The poor old woman was never wearied of expressing her gratitude towards one whom she had at first looked upon as her enemy, and finally died in her arms in the happiest dispositions. At this time the superior, Sister de Malville, fell dangerously ill, which added enormously to the fatigue and responsibility thrown on our Sister Vincent. The whole administration of the house fell upon her; yet she found time to visit the patients regularly, and to see that every medical direction was punctually carried out. Sometimes, with the irritation caused by her suffering, the superior would send constantly for Sister Vincent, interrupting her in the midst of the most critical occupations ; and, if she delayed coming for an instant, breaking out into bitter reproaches. Yet not an excuse or a complaint escaped her. She would simply kneel at the side of the superior's bed and humbly ask her pardon for having kept her waiting.

It was only by the special grace of God that her health and strength bore so continual a strain.

Yet she never omitted any of her religious exercises. A peculiar blessing seemed to rest on everything to which she put her hand ; and especially on the words she spoke to touch the hearts of sinners. In 1837 the town council of Bayonne organised a regular society to distribute food and medicine among the poor ; but insisted that the direction of it should be given to Sister Vincent. Although the sums awarded by the charitable to this work were very large, they were never enough for the heart of the sister ; she witnessed so much misery in her daily rounds ! The condition of the old people especially, moved her to immense compassion, and very soon she had the happiness of being able to open a refuge for thirty of them, whom age and infirmities rendered incapable of earning their bread. This new work was not begun without many vexations and much contradiction from those who managed the finances. To one of the sisters, who was pitying her for the hard battles she had to fight for her poor, she replied : " Child that you are ! what does it signify what we have to suffer provided the good work be accomplished ? "

In the month of January 1840, the new "House of Mercy," as it was called, was finally separated from the hospital, and Sister Vincent was appointed the superior. Her humility made her shrink from the charge, which obedience

alone compelled her to undertake: "The only thing that comforts me is, that there will be *a great deal to suffer*," she exclaimed, when the orders from Paris were imperative. And so indeed it proved; but her patience and gentleness overcame all obstacles, and she had the joy of seeing the new foundation well established before a fresh order from her superiors recalled her to the Hospital of St. Léon as its Superior. The joy of the patients and of the sisters at her return may be easily imagined. They looked upon her as a direct *gift from God*. She had been but two years away from them, but her loss had left a void which no other sister had replaced. The hospital became a little Paradise under her superintendence, and the only terror of the Community was that she might be promoted to a more important work. These fears were realised. At the end of three years she was appointed to the Naval Hospital at Rochefort, vacant by the departure of the Mère Mazin for Paris. In the midst of her own sorrow, this noble woman thought but of softening the news to the hearts of her sorrowing sisters: "Let us make the sacrifice of ourselves generously," she exclaimed. "Our superiors wish me to start at once for my destination; you will understand that I must hasten to obey. To-morrow we receive the Holy Communion; it will be the best way of

parting, and we will pray for one another." One of the sisters in writing about her departure, says: "In the midst of my tears I wanted to arrange her little travelling-bag, but I could find literally nothing to put into it! She was so poor that she would not have had even one pair of stockings on Saturday if I had not seen after them every week myself. I collected from each of the sisters the little things which I thought absolutely necessary for her on the journey; but to our despair, we found afterwards she had opened the bag and replaced all the comforts we had had such pleasure in putting up for her—her love of poverty and self-abnegation would not let her allow the least attempt to supply her needs."

Before giving an account of her life at Rochefort some little traits of character recorded of her during her stay at Bayonne, will interest our readers. One of her greatest anxieties was to form the minds of the young sisters under her to a thorough conformity with the spirit of their great Founder. Tender and considerate towards the failings of each, she never missed the opportunity of saying the "little word in season" which made such an impression upon them, that it often changed their characters for life. "Strive to walk always as in the presence of God," she would repeat, "and to be united with Him. Everything else is of little worth. Believe me,

the more we talk and devote ourselves to creatures, the less progress we shall make in the interior life, and the further we shall be from attaining to perfection." To one who complained that her superior had forbidden her writing home, she replied, with the simple faith which was her eminent characteristic, "Well, but have you not got our dear Lord to go to? Go and pray for a few minutes before His Tabernacle, and ask Him to reassure your family about you: He will do your commission better than yourself." To another, who was inclined to impatience and irritability, she would say with loving tenderness: "Dear child! you must try and acquire greater gentleness: it is not natural to you, I know; but how pleased our Lord will be when He sees the generous efforts you are making to acquire it." A little word of encouragement like this would kindle the zeal of the most tepid. Again, seeing the tendency in another to a love of ease and self-indulgence, she would exclaim: "Ah! we must learn to bear little troubles and mortifications for the love of God. Our hearts should be ground as wheat in the mill:" or again: "Never try to escape from your cross, be it light or heavy. If you suffer, offer it up to God. Do not allow yourself the habit of complaining of trifles, especially of the little discomforts and pains to which our bodies are

subject. Learn to bear them in silence, and make them an occasion of merit by patience, cheerfulness, and submission to God's will." To a postulant, who had just arrived, she gave in a few words a whole rule of life: "*Let the wish to please God and to fulfil scrupulously the duties of your office, be your whole study. God expects of you neither more nor less.*" To another, who was in great sorrow, she said, tenderly: "Do not fancy I do not enter into your grief and feel for your trouble; but think what it is to have something to offer up to Him who has suffered so much for you."

Her thanksgivings after Holy Communion were touching in their depth and fervour. "How can we thank God enough?" she would exclaim. "My dear sisters, let every aspiration of our souls, every beat of our hearts, be turned into acts of praise for this inestimable blessing;" and then she would softly repeat to herself the 102nd Psalm. But her daily life had a more powerful effect on her sisters than her words. It was impossible to detect in her the least imperfection. Her days were distributed with such perfect order and regularity that she always contrived to get through an amount of work which to others seemed impossible. One of the superintendents of the hospital writing to N. T. H. Père Général, says: "In my daily intercourse with her, it was

difficult to say in what she was the most remarkable, for the simple reason that everything, down to the most minute detail, was done at the right moment and in the right way. Her charity and her humility were only equalled by her intelligence and zeal ; but what overcame all opposition was her wonderful evenness of temper. One of my colleagues in the administration was apt to be hasty and inconsiderate in his proposals, and used sometimes to have rather hot discussions with the Mère Dévos ; but afterwards he would take his place at the council, half-laughing, and say, ‘ Well, it’s of no use ; one can’t help yielding to her. If only she would once get angry ! But no, she never does.’ ”

Every one in the place came to her for advice and counsel, or to tell her their troubles. She used to listen to each and all with unalterable patience, yet without ever losing her time. She had always some work in hand, and used to receive her visitors in a little room, without a fire, opposite the porter’s lodge, where she was sometimes detained for hours ; but she never seemed to feel either cold or heat. The only complaint I had to make of her was, that she would never attend to her own health. One day I missed her in the wards, and was alarmed to hear that she had fainted after her Mass, and had been compelled to lie down. I went to her and said, drily, “ I

pity the sisters who are under your orders if you are as cruel to them as you are to yourself." She coloured, and replied, "O! as for my sisters, I should not allow them to get up if they were ill, but for oneself, *one is always so afraid of listening to one's own miserable inclination to self-indulgence.*"

Her knowledge of character seemed to be intuitive. One day the Père Biarnés expressed his surprise that in her necessary absence now and then from the hospital, she appointed a certain sister to replace her *out of whom one could never drag a word.* "It is quite true," she replied, smiling, "My sister N. does not talk much, *but she acts;* and that is what I want." Subsequent experience abundantly proved the wisdom of her choice.

Soon after her departure, N. T. H. Père Général paid a visit to Bayonne. He was frankly told "that he need not expect to be well received, for that no one could forgive him for having taken away the Mère Dévos." One of them added, "But how came you to think of the superior of our humble little hospital in searching for one for a House like Rochefort?" The Père Etienne smiled, and said, "Ah! we have our secret police." The almoner of the hospital, a man of singular piety himself, thus writes of this admirable woman: "She was without exception the best Christian I have ever

known, the purest, most generous, and most devoted of souls. '*Complete abnegation of herself; all for God and for her neighbour,*' that might have been taken for her motto. Nature seemed to me to have died in her altogether. She had, while at Bayonne, every kind of contradiction, trial, and humiliation, but no one would have guessed it. During the fourteen years she passed here, she never made a single enemy. Severe towards herself to an extent which caused me continual anxiety, towards every one else she was as tender, considerate, and indulgent as possible, watching over the bodily and spiritual wants of her sisters or her sick with minute and motherly care. Every one loved and respected her; yet a certain impress of sanctity made one fearful of displeasing her, and maintained the order and regularity indispensable in the administration of a large establishment. Her love of poverty was a constant subject of amusement to the bishop, who used to say that she always *bid her feet* when business obliged her to come into his drawing-room, lest he should observe that her shoes were worn into holes. Her detachment from earthly affections was equally remarkable. Although naturally the most tender-hearted and loving of women, she never allowed herself any particular friendship—any preference for one sister over the other—and was ready at any moment to make the sacrifice of

every personal inclination either for the good of others or in obedience to her superiors. '*It is the will of God, and Heaven is the price!*' was one of her favourite sayings. The day of her departure, no one was aware of it. She left the chapel after Holy Communion, simply desiring the porter to ring the bell for the sister who used to replace her with the children, and then quietly walked out of the hospital, without the knowledge of any of the sisters, who only found it out when they left the chapel after the Act of Thanksgiving. I do not know what destiny God reserves for her on earth ; but I am very sure that He will give her a place among His most faithful servants in His kingdom in Heaven."

The sisters at Rochefort had hardly made up their minds to part with their venerable Mère Mazin, when the great bell of the hospital sounded, and two sisters were seen coming up the avenue. One was the Superior of La Rochelle ; the other, our Mère Dévos.

One of the Community describing her arrival, said : " Her manner struck us all at once by its mixture of dignity and humility. She walked quickly towards us, with only a little black bag on her arm, and an undefinable expression of goodness and tenderness seemed to pervade her whole face. We all felt ourselves irresistibly attracted towards her from the first moment she came among us."

The Mère Mazin remained a few days longer at Rochefort, and wishing to spare the sisters the pain of saying "goodbye," left the hospital as secretly as the Mère Dévos had done from Bayonne, only leaving a few lines for them of affectionate farewell. The Mère Dévos read them to the Community on her knees, her voice broken by sobs: "It is indeed a sorrow and a loss to you, dear sisters," she exclaimed, "as well as to the whole House, and I, alas! am utterly unworthy to replace her. I can only give you a willing heart and an earnest desire to make you happy. May God supply to you my many deficiencies. Let us only be faithful to our holy Rules and our Good Master will not abandon us." There was something in her way of pronouncing these words which touched all their hearts; and each resolved to do her utmost to merit a place in her affections.

Her first work at Rochefort, as at Bayonne, was to train her young sisters, to win their confidence, and lead them in the paths of perfection. Every week, in spite of her multifarious occupations, she found time to see each of them alone for a few moments, and give her the advice or help of which she stood most in need. At the risk of wearying our readers, we will again record a few of these golden words. She had that peculiar light, so often granted in the Confessional, to

understand the difficulties of each character, and the best way of remedying them. To one who was discouraged she would say, "My poor child, when one only wishes to please God, failure should not disconcert us. All He looks to is *our intention*. All He asks for is a *ready will*." To another, "It is not necessary to be sad or dull to become better. Sadness is never a fruit of the Holy Spirit, but gentleness and modesty, and a cheerful bearing of our cross for His sake." To a third she exclaimed one day, "And you, my poor child, how do you get on?" "I am good for nothing, ma sœur," replied this sister, "but to go from the laundry to the wash-house and back again, all day long and every day." "Very well," answered the Mother, "but recollect *from the laundry to Heaven there is but one step*, think often of that!" One year when the number of sick compelled the administrators of the hospital to open several new wards, the Mother was obliged to confide the care of them to some of the younger sisters. She called them to her and spoke as follows: "You see, my dear sisters, our force is not sufficient. Sisters N. and M. are worn out; you must replace them. I know you cannot yet do like them, but you must each day go to the chapel and, at the feet of the Blessed Virgin, make this prayer: 'My Mother, I am given an office of which I am not yet

capable, but I reckon on your help ; guide and help me to do right.' When you have any service to render to your sick, never forget that it is to our Lord Himself you are offering it. If you serve them in this spirit of love and faith, you are sure to succeed." At the same time she was equally anxious to guard them from self-sufficiency, or pride. Against every species of self-esteem she waged a relentless war. If any distinct duty were omitted in their round of service, she insisted on a confession of the fault being made, not only to her, but to the doctor of the ward. Sometimes her sisters craved for a little word of approval or of praise. One of them, after waiting in vain for some time, could not resist saying, " Dear Mother ! own that we have not done amiss ; that we deserve your confidence." " How can you speak in such a manner ? " replied the Mother, surprised at the speech. " Do you not know that when one wishes to please God, one can never feel one has done enough ? that when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants ? " She set, herself, the example of the most perfect regularity and attention to the most minute details of the Rule. She never missed the hour of the religious exercises of the Community on any pretence whatever. Her favourite saying was, "*that a soul united with God always found time for everything,*"

and she was a living example of its truth. She was never an instant idle, and would not suffer anyone else to be so who was under her influence. Her humility was strikingly shown by her asking as a favour of one of the sisters* (a village girl) to tell her every day of anything she saw wrong in her manner or actions. The confusion of the sister may be imagined. However, the Mère Dévos insisted ; and one day the sister told her "she had been late for the hour of recreation," which was a point on which the Mother laid great stress with the rest. The Mère Dévos instantly and humbly replied, "You are quite right. I will take care to be more exact in future." Another day she had been very much tired and worried, and was rather sad and preoccupied. The sister told her so. Her face brightened at once, while she exclaimed, "Thank you so much ! I will try and guard myself more carefully." On another occasion, having been conscious of an inward feeling of irritation at some unpunctuality which had been caused by a great over-press of work, she insisted on confessing her fault publicly before the whole Community in the evening, although none of them had remarked what she called "her bad temper." Each time she entered the sick wards she knelt for an instant as if she were going into chapel.

* This sister is now at Madrid.

One of the sisters asked her why? She replied, "I wish to honour the Presence of our Lord in His suffering members." She would never miss her turn of night-watching, however great had been her fatigue during the day. She would say to the sister who shared it with her, "Here we are alone, to watch and pray. Let us unite ourselves with our Saviour in the Mount of Olives; and let us recommend our sick to the good angels, so that they may deign to watch over them, and bring them all into a state of grace." Her charity was ingenious in contriving every possible alleviation to the sufferers. She would inquire of their homes and their country, and would herself prepare any little dish or delicacy which they might fancy; but she was still more anxious for their spiritual welfare, and never missed an occasion of leading their thoughts upwards. To those who were despairing or desponding she would say, "Ah! what we have to suffer here will all appear so small at the hour of our death. We shall be so glad to have had something to offer up to Him. To suffer patiently is often better than work; and '*up ibere*,'" she added, with an inexpressible look of joy in her face, pointing to the sky, "all will be repaid to us." Her influence among the convicts was as wonderful as all the rest. It was a common saying among them, that "*no one could resist her.*" Those whom repeated punishments had

rendered insensible to all human shame, were softened and won over to lead penitent lives by the urgent pleadings and angelic sweetness of the Mother. It would be too long to relate the numberless instances in which the most dissolute were reformed, and the most careless awakened by her to the realities of a future life. Nothing deterred her, or moved her to impatience or disgust; and the conversions, which her words failed to effect, were granted to her prayers. One of her first cares on entering the hospital was to appoint a better system of orderlies for the care of the sick. She contrived to get together a really superior class of men for the purpose; and in order that they might not fall into the temptations of a seaport town, she invented every kind of game and amusement she could think of within the walls of the hospital. She would give them little feasts of fruit and wine on Sundays and other days, and encouraged them to practise music, and every kind of rational recreation. She never passed them in the wards without a kind word. To one who was rather overworked she said one day, "My poor fellow, you have not yet done?" The man answered, rather gloomily, "Done, ma Sœur! here one *never* has done." "Courage!" she replied. "Don't forget that you and I are both here *to sacrifice ourselves*, and that we must try and gain

Heaven, *coûte que coûte*. Courage, then!" The poor orderly repeated her words afterwards, and said that he should never forget them as long as he lived. She became their counsellor and friend, and their *confidante* in every difficulty; they remitted to her their savings; and years after she had left the hospital they wrote to consult her on every emergency, and in spite of her overwhelming occupations, she always found time to answer these letters herself, recollecting with the greatest accuracy and minuteness the peculiar history and circumstances of each. One of the most remarkable traits in her character was that *she never spoke of herself*, neither for good nor for evil; and her manner was so simple that a stranger would probably have passed her by without suspecting her great merits. But one of the inspectors, who had been sent from Paris to visit the hospital, exclaimed on leaving it, "What rare ability there is in that superior! She does not make much show, and talks very little; but look at her administration! There is nothing of which she is not capable."

Eleven years had elapsed since she had undertaken the charge of Rochefort, when N. T. H. Père proposed to her to accompany him on a journey he was about to undertake into Spain. Her residence at Bayonne had given her some knowledge of the language, and the permission of the Admiralty having been obtained, she left

Rochefort on a two months' leave in 1856, and repaired to Madrid. Her conduct on the journey was as remarkable for devotion and unselfishness as the rest of her life ; her charity always found the means of sparing the others, while she encumbered herself with everybody's luggage, and chose the most uncomfortable and the worst places in the Diligences. This visit to Madrid laid the foundation for the establishment of the noble Houses of Charity which now exist in that town ; but for the moment, the execution of the plan was delayed, and the Mère Dévos returned to her much-loved hospital at Rochefort. But she felt that a final separation was imminent. Five months later she was appointed Superior of the new Spanish Mission, and taking leave of her sorrowing sisters, started for Paris, where she was to choose the little band who were to accompany her to Madrid, and receive her orders from her superiors. Her departure from Rochefort caused even more sorrow and desolation than the one which we already related at Bayonne, for her influence had been still more widely exercised. But however deeply she felt the separation herself, she allowed no word to escape her. She seemed to fear lest human sympathy and human consolations should deprive her sacrifice of its merit. She wished to offer it without reserve to God. "I am starting for Spain," she simply said to

the weeping Community : “ Be generous and say nothing, I implore you. God wills it ; that is enough. We will pray for one another.”

Her stay at Paris was as short as was possible consistently with her business. She had arranged not to leave her post till the hour when her presence was absolutely necessary at Paris for the arrangements of the journey, so as not to lose a moment or give herself any recreation. Her only anxiety during the few hours she passed in the Maison Mère seemed to be to hide herself from notice or esteem — “ *de s'effacer*,” as the expressive French word says.

On the 12th November 1856, she started from Paris with nine sisters by the evening train, stopping first at Bayonne, in her old Hospital of St. Léon. Here she was surrounded by all her old children, who were only too delighted to have her once more for a few hours amongst them. Among the visitors was the Vicar-General, to whom she presented her new sisters, asking for his blessing and prayers on them and their new work. The venerable priest turned towards them and said, “ I have long known the saint-like Sisters of Charity at Bayonne, and especially your Superior, and I assure you I have often said to myself, In the day of judgment they will be your judges.’ ” In saying these words he pointed to the Mother. She made the same

impression everywhere, “*that she was a Saint upon earth.*” What others seemed or tried to be, *she was!*

From Bayonne, the journey was long, wearisome, and even dangerous. The rigour of the season, the bad roads, the miserable diligences, all added to their fatigue. But the Mother never seemed to give it a thought. Their number was too large to be able to keep together in one compartment. She made the sisters change places so as to have each of them with her in turn, always taking the worst and most exposed corner for herself. Every religious exercise was attended to on the journey as regularly as if they had been at home; vocal and mental prayer, hours of silence, and all the rest. There is a saying, “that a journey rarely contributes to sanctification.” She reversed the proverb. The more she was free from the petty occupations of a household, the more she seemed to be united to God, and to make progress in the interior life. But this did not prevent her watching over the health and comfort of her sisters in every possible way. Her only anxiety seemed to be for them.

After four days and nights consecutively, spent on the road, perished with cold and exhausted by fatigue, they arrived at the house of the new Foundation at Madrid, but to their dismay, found that it was entirely empty. There were neither

tables, nor chairs, nor beds, nor a single article of furniture ; so that they were obliged to seek hospitality elsewhere, and the Spanish Sisters of Charity took them in by twos and threes till all were housed. But the Mère Dévos worked so energetically during the course of the next few days, and was so ably assisted by the charitable ladies who had asked for the establishment of the Mission in their city, that towards the end of the week they were once more reassembled together under the roof of their new home. A great many necessaries were, however, still wanting, and some of the sisters felt unhappy and discouraged at so inauspicious a beginning. The Mother, on the contrary, though older than the rest (she was then fifty-four), and accustomed to the perfect order and convenience of the Hospital at Rochefort, never seemed to feel their manifold privations, except to make her sisters look upon them as great privileges. "Are we not happy?" she would exclaim. "St. Vincent wished that we should not be better off than 'our masters' the poor, and now we have the consolation of feeling that they are better off than we! Dear sisters, let us rejoice together!" She insisted on the sisters keeping an absolute silence as to their own needs, especially before the ladies who were so charitably disposed to come to their aid. "Be very careful," she would

repeat, "not to ask for anything you may want for yourselves ; but speak to these ladies of the wants of the poor, and try and obtain what you can of them for their relief." On one occasion one of these ladies discovered that the sister who had charge of the kitchen had but one miserable coffee-pot in which to make the breakfast, prepare the soup, and everything else. She instantly supplied what was necessary, rather to the annoyance of the Mother, who feared that some indiscretion on the part of the sisters had provoked the gift. A few days after, the first letter arrived from Rochefort. She fell on her knees before opening it, and a few tears escaped her. Then rising, she asked the forgiveness of the sisters who were present, saying, "I beg your pardon for my miserable weakness, but I loved those sisters so much!" At the end of five months the new Mission was thoroughly established. Writing to the Mère Générale at this time, she said, "We are now well accustomed to our work, and the health of the sisters is good in spite of their fatigues. Everyone has shown the greatest anxiety for our success. The Minister of the Interior has been here two or three times. The Queen is coming herself on Friday. We have begun our classes, and have about five hundred children. Tomorrow we open our crèche. The orphanage is

flourishing. We have also started a work-room. On all sides applications come for us to visit the sick, and to open a dispensary. The King has desired me to apply to you for another sister, who is to bear his name. He has settled to send us fifty more children, and to pay us two hundred and fifty francs a month for their instruction. It seems as if God had deigned specially to bless our work in spite of our feebleness and unworthiness." In that short time she had won the confidence and the admiration of everyone connected with or interested in the new Foundation. She literally had only to ask for what she wanted, to obtain it. The whole Community laboured from morning till night. The only time when they allowed themselves a little rest was after supper, at the hour of recreation, which the Mère Dévos strove to make as merry and cheerful as possible, to compensate to her sisters for the frequent little mortifications and constant toil of the day. She was ingenious in contriving little surprises and pleasures for them; and each one felt that she was the object of her loving solicitude and care. But her health could not resist such incessant toil and thought; a low fever consumed her strength; and though she struggled against it in a superhuman manner, there were times when her needle or scissors would fall from her hands with the violence of

the shivering fit, and she was compelled to go and lie down. When too ill to move, she submitted herself like a little child to the orders of the doctor, obeying him in every particular, and accepting the compulsory idleness, which was so distasteful to her energetic spirit, with the same patience as she did every other cross.

But her stay at Madrid was destined to be short. In June 1857, she was chosen *Mère Générale* of the whole Sisterhood. The letter announcing the event was brought to her by one of the sisters, who, seeing by the address the news it contained, could not hide her tears at the idea of their fresh separation. The Mother remained silent, pale, and as one struck dumb, at the intelligence; then exclaiming, "O! my Lord and Saviour, it is my sins which have drawn upon me this punishment. I have deserved it; I have been so often unfaithful to the leadings of Thy grace! I ought to have expected this severe penance." She hastened to the chapel, and throwing herself on her knees before the Blessed Sacrament, shed a torrent of tears. After remaining there for a quarter of an hour, at the feet of her Master, her emotion ceased. She returned to the Community, and nothing in her face or manner betrayed what she had suffered. The other sisters were ignorant of the whole matter till she told them herself a few days later,

and those who had not seen her in her first moments of sorrow, might have fancied her perfectly indifferent to the change. The secret of her peace was this, that whether humbled or exalted, she submitted and forgot herself. Her answer to N. T. H. Père was short but characteristic: "It is the first time that it costs me a struggle to obey you." Thus only did she express the bitterness of the cup he had given her to drink. Her departure could no longer be managed with the secrecy and humility in which she delighted. The whole Court would insist on joining their farewells to those of her sorrowing Community; and she, whose only anxiety was to escape from honours, was compelled to accept every species of homage, and to go in a Royal carriage to meet the diligence. She submitted to this inevitable testimony of respect in the spirit of self-abnegation which was the key-note of her life, maintaining the same modest simplicity and attributing all the glory and success of her work to Him who had so greatly blessed her faithful endeavours.

At every station she found herself received with the deepest respect. At Bayonne, at Bordeaux, and all the other towns on her passage, deputations met her to express their joy at her elevation, and to implore her to grant them if but a few hours of a time so precious. But the Mother

felt that she could not delay her arrival in Paris. On the day and at the hour indicated by N. T. H. Père, the sisters and novices were ranged in rows in the avenue which leads to the entrance door of the *Maison Mère*; the great bell sounded, and the Mère Dévos entered on the scene of her future labours. Every look was turned upon her; an air of gentle gravity could not conceal the deep sadness which pervaded her whole expression. One felt that she looked upon her high position as a heavy cross, which nothing but the grace of God could give her strength to bear. Yet she endured all the necessary fatigue and receptions entailed upon her by the exigencies of her new position during this and the succeeding days, without a syllable of complaint, though she never could have an instant of solitude or silence.

Hardly was she installed in her post, when she began to devote herself to her innumerable duties with an energy which did not admit of one moment's relaxation. Yet, labour as she would, she could not keep pace with the work. "You certainly are *at the galleys*, ma Mère," said a sister to her one day. "You never *can* go on like this." "Well," she replied, smiling, "if I can but accomplish my task, and if our Master be content, that is enough." With the most minute attention to every detail, and a perfectly clear-headed perception of every difficulty, she yet

never seemed disturbed, hurried, or perplexed. Affairs, persons, and things succeeded one another without intermission every moment of the day. There were three doors to her room, and people came in by them all incessantly. Each had to be received, listened to, answered, and satisfied. Yet the continual strain never seemed to weary her patience or her charity. The only thing which sometimes vexed her was, that the sisters who came to her from a distance often could not get speech of her, and had to return without the advice or consolation they sought. She would exclaim, "How grieved I am ! and the time of those dear sisters is so precious." But no human strength could long resist such incessant toil. One of her Rochefort sisters, coming accidentally into her room, found her with her head buried in her hands. "I can do no more," she exclaimed, in answer to her frightened inquiry ; and a consultation of doctors, which soon followed, confirmed the worst fears of the Community. N. T. H. Père published a touching Circular, in which he invoked the prayers of the whole Society for the recovery of a Mother so justly dear to them all. Several of the sisters offered to God their own lives in exchange for hers ; a sacrifice, in several cases, accepted. In the meantime, the Mother herself, entirely resigned to the will of God, expressed no anxiety either for life or death. Yet

her sufferings were almost intolerable. No change of position gave her any ease or relief; but she never allowed a groan to escape her. One of the sisters conjured her not to use such violence with herself on this point. "Dear Mother! our Blessed Lord allowed Himself a complaint on the Cross, and He is our Great Model." The Mère Dévos feebly answered, "My God, my God, have mercy upon me." At other times she would speak of the sufferings of our Saviour. "Who can measure them?" she would exclaim, "and yet every day we offend Him. He died on the Cross for us, and no one thinks of it." The sisters told her of the Circular of N. T. H. Père on her account. She exclaimed, "Then it is all over. I must give up all hope of Heaven this time; that's what it is to be Superior! If I were a poor sister, they would let me die in peace. I should not have this army of fervent souls to take Heaven by storm, so that my penance should be prolonged. What is our Lord to do with such a formidable army, all praying for one miserable life? He is so merciful, He will yield. But may His will be done." Some of the sisters, knowing her profound humility, were persuaded that she had asked this illness of God when appointed Superior, so that the time of her exile should be shortened; but when questioned on the subject, she said simply, "No; I should not

have dared to offer such a prayer; I should have thought it a want of submission. I only said to Him, 'My God, if I can be a humble instrument to cause Your Name to be glorified, *bere I am*; if not, take me out of the world.' " The "*neuvaine*" for her recovery drew to a close, and every day the bad symptoms diminished, to the great surprise of the doctors. About the time of the Feast of St. Vincent, she was perfectly well, and able to return to her arduous work. She joined heartily in the thanksgivings for her recovery, saying, "Yes, I am glad that your prayers have been granted; I should have been so afraid that the faith of our dear little sisters of the Seminary in the efficacy of prayer might have been weakened if they had had the disappointment, after all, of seeing me die." One of the sisters asked her how she could resign herself to give up her own opinion in matters where she was often in the right. She replied, "I say always what I believe in my conscience to be just, and as I shall wish to have said when I come to die. But when once that duty is accomplished my mind is at peace, whether my advice be adopted or not. I think it is very possible I may have been mistaken, and, at any rate, I feel sure that our Great Master will know how to overrule all things to His glory."

Fifteen months had elapsed since she had

accepted her onerous charge, and fifteen more were to pass before the final illness which was to put an end to her time of probation. During these months it seemed as if her virtue and holiness were continually on the increase, as if she fore-saw her approaching end, and became in consequence more and more anxious to lay up treasures in Heaven. When any new proposal was made to her, she would reflect deeply for a little time, weigh well the possible difficulties, pray for a few moments with fervour, and then give her decision ; from which she never departed except in obedience to a higher authority. In this way she founded, during the two-and-a-half years of her administration, one hundred and eighty new Houses, of which one hundred and ten were in distant parts of the world. Such were the Missions to Peru, to Buenos Ayres, to the Isle de Bourbon, and, nearer home, to London. The whole organisation of these new establishments fell upon her ; but the joy she felt at their success made her even rejoice at her fatigues. When the war in Italy began, she sent out in three months no less than one hundred and twenty-one sisters, furnished with all that was necessary for the comfort of the sick. Again, when every two months there was a clothing of fresh sisters, her motherly solicitude seemed to multiply itself to contrive everything for their spiritual advance-

ment, and so to place them as to suit their respective characters, to prevent injury to their health, and, as far as possible, to give them the employment for which they were most suited ; so that the talents of each might be employed most advantageously for the glory of God and the good of His poor. In the midst of her multifarious occupations, she did not forget her own soul. She felt that the rock on which a Sister of Charity was most likely to split, was that of giving herself up so entirely to exterior works as to neglect the Spiritual Exercises of the Rule ; and she had the gift of being able to unite most perfectly the greatest assiduity in work with equal regularity and fervour in prayer.

In her relations with all the members of her immense family, her charity and tenderness knew no bounds but the restraint which duty and a strong sense of justice at times imposed upon her. Perhaps her standard was so high, her own self-abnegation so entire, that she scarcely made sufficient allowance for the weaknesses of human nature. She could not understand that a Sister of Charity should not be ready to sacrifice herself at every hour of the day for the glory of God, or the good of others ; and, judging of others by herself, thought self-immolation the only source of happiness. To the sister-superiors, whom business, or the Retreat, recalled for a short time

to the Maison Mère, she was the wisest and tenderest of advisers. She could only give a few minutes to each, but every word had its point and its meaning. "Remember," she would say to them, "that you must lead others by the edification of your own charity, regularity, and good example. Never shrink from finding fault, if necessary. Painful as it may be to yourself, you owe it to the younger sisters who are under your care; but let every word be tempered by love. Teach them, at any cost, to maintain that spirit of charity among themselves and towards others which is the very foundation of our Order, and without which all our works are in vain." She would not suffer any Superior to absent herself from her family an hour longer than was absolutely necessary. "I cannot understand," she often said, "how a Superior, who is away from her House without real necessity, can ever be at peace. Without doing anything extraordinary, she maintains order and discipline by her very presence. The whole well-being of a House depends on her. I never went out myself without being compelled; but I never came back without finding that some little thing had gone wrong, which made me regret my involuntary absence from my post." On several occasions, she was petitioned to let such and such a Superior stay a day or two longer to take part in some little fête,

or see a friend, &c. She would answer quietly, "Sister N. must settle it with her own conscience. I leave her at liberty. She knows very well what she ought to do." "Every one of our moments are counted," she would add. "There is not one for which we shall not have to give account before the Great Judge; and *we* have not *one* of our own, recollect! they all belong to the Community and to our poor. Oh! if you would but reflect how short time is!"

Sometimes, when leaving her, the sisters would exclaim, "Well, our Mother is certainly a Saint; but I believe no sacrifice weighs an ounce with her. It is all for Grace; nothing for poor human nature." She never, herself, left the Maison Mère except when compelled by circumstances. "Are you going out?" exclaimed one of the sisters in surprise, on meeting her one day at the entrance door. "Yes," she replied, "I am going to make my 'Via Crucis'"—thus expressing the unwillingness with which she gave herself this little change. Towards the Missionaries of the Society she always manifested the greatest respect and gratitude, and was never weary of labouring for them, nursing them when ill, and listening with dutiful eagerness to their sermons or instructions. She made her last Retreat in October 1859. But before undertaking it she went into the infirmary, and approaching a sister who

suffered from a cruelly painful disease, gently whispered to her: "You will grant me an hour of your sufferings each day during my Retreat, will you not? They have such value when accepted, as yours are, for God. I come to beg for the prayers of all the sick, that I may pass these days as our Lord wishes." On November 15, 1859, N. T. H. Père desired her to meet him on his return from Spain, at her dearly-loved Hospital of Rochefort. Her spirit of renunciation had made her, till then, refuse herself this pleasure. But a severe attack of illness obliged her to postpone it. The following month, however, she was enabled to undertake the journey. The joy of her sisters, and of the whole House, at seeing her once more, was only equalled by her own thankfulness at finding the same regularity and the same spirit pervading the hospital as on the day she left it. The orderlies were not the last to welcome her, and receive her words of loving counsel. Little did any of them imagine that they were *the last* which they would ever have the happiness of hearing from those lips on earth.

Before detailing the events of the last few days of her life, we will give a short *r  sum  * of those great traits in her character which distinguished her above almost all other Sisters of Charity for the perfection with which she entered into the

spirit of St. Vincent, and conformed herself in every particular to his Rules.

And first as to her *bumility*. Humble in her thoughts, in her words, and in her actions, she honestly thought herself the last and worst of God's servants. The nearer she was to Him "who was meek and humble of heart," the more she saw her own imperfections in the light of His holiness and purity. As soon as one of her old Confessors at Rochefort heard of her dangerous illness, he exclaimed, "She was too humble to be put in the first place ; the position has killed her." Sometimes her sister would say to her, "But you forget you are our '*Tres honorée Mère !*'" She would reply, "Ah ! I wish I could ; the very idea crushes me. I try all I can to forget it ; and to feel that I am only filling a certain office like the rest, of which I must strive to fulfil the duties as well as I can." The most simple circumstance gave her the opportunity of practising this virtue. If she gave a commission to one of the sisters, or any directions, she would instantly add, "I am sure you will do it much better than I." If her sisters showed her the least extra deference or respect, or tried in any way to do little services for her, she would exclaim, "I cannot let you wait on me. I am here to serve you, not to be served." If any word she had ever spoken had given pain, she would go

through the House to find the sister whose feelings had been wounded, and ask her pardon on her knees. One day, in writing out a list, she had put one name for the other by mistake. It was read out by a sister, who corrected the error; but the Mère Dévos thought she had missed an occasion for humbling herself, and directly said, “I did not explain that the fault was mine; it was my pride which shut my mouth. See how unworthy I am! I humbly ask your pardon.” It is said that “honours often change people.” With her, they seemed only to deepen her belief in her own littleness and insufficiency. Often, when Superior, or, as they are so simply and beautifully called in the Society, “*Sœur Servante*,” she was searched for in vain. She delighted in performing the most fatiguing and the most menial offices. In the kitchen, in the laundry, wherever the press of work was greatest, there she was always to be found, only distinguished from the rest by her superior sanctity. When compelled to “keep her place” as Mère Générale, it was a perfect martyrdom to her. She used to try in every way to avoid it. She would profit by the fact of the younger sisters not knowing her, to let them pass before her, to wait upon them at table, or the like. On one occasion, when, at the Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, strangers were admitted into the

chapel, she contrived so well that she had not even a corner in which to kneel or to sit for the evening exercise. An old workman occupied her chair, never dreaming that he was taking the place of the Superior of the Community. One of the sisters relates of herself that on a certain occasion she had been unjustly blamed for a fault she had not committed, and had justified herself rather hotly to her Superior. Her conscience, however, would not let her rest. It was the eve of the Holy Communion. She felt she could not meet our Lord, and the hour for Confession was past. In this strait she went to the Mère Générale and told her all. The Mère Dévos listened to her with great tenderness, and after some encouraging words said, "You did wrong to answer again. You must go and beg pardon, not excusing yourself this time, but letting them believe you committed the fault."—"But, ma Mère, I cannot say I did it; it would not be true."—"Never mind," she replied, "humble yourself as if you had done it." This seemed to the sister beyond her strength, and she was retiring in silence, when the Mother called her back. "Where are you going?"—"To my Office, dear Mother."—"But it is not the hour; it is the time of Recreation." The sister replied, "How can I go there in tears as I am?" The Mother said, gently, "And what will God say if

you are not where the Rule tells you to be? Go for a minute first before the Tabernacle." The sister went; Grace had conquered; she felt herself courageous enough to bear the mortification which the Mother had imposed upon her; and peace returned to her soul. On another occasion, the Mother said to one of the sisters, "I was vexed yesterday."—"At what?" she replied. "At seeing that you went out of the room at the moment something disagreeable was being said to you. It was the very occasion to stop and to offer it up to our Lord, who would have been pleased with you. Everything that happens here is of so little importance! *Can one be troubled by some few unkind words from our fellow-creatures, when we seek only God?*" Again, an undeserved reproach had been addressed to another sister, who was about to express her regret at the annoyance of which she had not been the cause. "Say nothing," she whispered to her; "remain quiet. '*The Master*' knows *the rights of it*; let it pass in silence." She tried to make her sisters not only remain silent on such occasions, but strive not even to *feel* them. One of the superiors was detailing to her the many difficulties of the kind that she met with in a position of singular trial, and asked her whether it would not be wiser for her to change. The Mother reflected a little, and then said, "I think

you make too much of the words and proceedings which are painful to you. You dwell upon them in your own mind till they become unnecessarily magnified. Believe me, do not try to alter the circumstances in which you are placed. Our Lord has put you in your present position. He has given you the occasion to do good in it. Have the courage to bear what He sends. He may not see fit to make your place easier. You may be perhaps even more tried—more humiliated. Every one may despise you. Well, it is for God you are working; let all the rest pass by. I feel sure that with His grace you can do without anything else."

Four members of her own family had joined the Community. The Mother was especially anxious that no distinction whatever should be made in their favour; and, on the contrary, never missed an occasion of teaching them lessons of mortification and humility. "My poor child," she said to one of them, "you are very far from having the look of a real Sister of Charity. You must try and keep out of the way as much as possible. Let no one find out that you are in the House; if our sisters are kind enough to employ you, do your best; but do not forget that you are a greater hindrance than help. *Lead, above all things, a hidden life.*"

Next to her humility was its twin-sister

simplicity ; in word, thought, action, and intention. It arose from her intense truthfulness and absence of all thought of self. She saw nothing but God, as Witness, as Judge, and as her final Reward. The idea of "What will people say?" or "What will people think?" never entered her head. She went straight to her point, having for guides her conscience, her superiors, and, above all, her Rule. "If 'the Master' is pleased, all the rest is nothing," was her favourite answer. One of the sisters relates that during the time she was at Rosny, she was often sent for to go to the Royal children, and to get to their apartments had to traverse a succession of rooms and encounter the whole *suite* of the Court. The sister who accompanied her, said, "She felt shy, and very uncomfortable." The Mère Dévos replied, "Why? Do like me. I don't think of them any more than if they were a row of cabbages!" Nothing, in fact, ever altered her modest, recollected manner, which came from a mind entirely fixed on God and her vocation. In the same manner, in her dealings with the authorities at Bayonne, Rochefort, and Madrid, she obtained everything by the straightforward, simple way in which she asked for the assistance she sought, or gave her advice when any plan was proposed to her. She abhorred anything like "*ruse*" or double-dealing. If any one, to

gain a particular end, deviated in the slightest degree from the truth, she would say, "Take care, it is not so and so ; one must state things exactly as they are." Her language was generally simple and to the point, whether in suggesting the subject for meditation, or giving counsel, or dictating a letter. She would say, "I am too ignorant to employ fine language. I like words to express just what I want to say and nothing more." When she was ill, she begged to be taken to the common infirmary, that she might, as she said, "*be with the rest,*" and have the privilege of hearing the Mass, which was said in the ward. The nursing sister having suggested that one of the Rochefort sisters (Sœur Philomène) should be sent for to nurse her, knowing that she had a great affection for her, she replied, "O ! no. Let her stay where she is, if you will only be kind enough to take care of me with the others." In her piety, she was as simple as in all the rest. She sought for nothing beyond what her holy Rule afforded her. Life in Community, with its daily acts of renunciation and self-denial, was sufficient for her needs. She once said to a sister, "I never allowed myself to ask for permission to perform extraordinary penances, much as I should have wished it ; for I thought that in devoting myself to the mortification of every sense, and the

continual renunciation of my will, I should enter better into the path traced out for us by our Lord. I do not blame those who adopt those practices. Only I thought, for myself, I could practise mortifications better in this way than in any other." In talking of books, she would delight in any which gave her new and holy thoughts; but she would add, "I am an *ignoramus*, who have read nothing—I never have had the time; but in our holy Rule we learn quite enough to show us the road to Heaven, if we could only follow it!" Her *prudence* was as remarkable as her simplicity. She had shown, from a child, a maturity of judgment and a clearness of comprehension which astonished her superiors. She knew when to speak and when to be silent; and this spirit, like all the rest, she drew from the one Fountain of Grace. When she was in any difficulty, she went simply to the feet of our Lord, and His Spirit directed her course. Sometimes her intuition seemed to her sisters almost miraculous. They could not believe "she had not been told such and such a thing by one of the others." She would prove to them the injustice of their suspicions, and add: "Be yourselves without fault, and then let people say what they will." She would never speak of things without necessity, and if compelled to admit one or other of the sisters into

any matter of confidence, she would add, "I reckon upon your discretion; above all, do not talk." One may, in fact, say of her, that she followed to the letter the rule our blessed Lord gave to His Apostles when He told them to unite "the prudence of the serpent with the simplicity of the dove."

Her *faith and trust in God* struck everyone who came in contact with her. She had the profoundest veneration for holy places and holy things—for Holy Water, among others, which she took on every occasion, especially if she feared having committed some slight infraction of the Rule. Her manner in Church impressed everyone. It was as if she saw Jesus Christ Himself on His altar. However long the service might be, she always remained on her knees, her hands clasped, as she had been taught in the Seminary, her eyes cast down, or fixed on her book, or, if not, on the Tabernacle which contained Him on whom her heart was fixed. The Sign of the Cross reminded her of the triple gift of our Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification. She would exclaim, "If we did but know the force and the power of the Holy Spirit, and how in an instant He revives the spark of grace and love in the heart of the most hardened! How sublime a prayer is the Sign of the Cross! It unites us, as it were, with the Three Adorable

Persons, and cleanses us from the venial sins into which our weakness so continually betrays us." When, at three o'clock, she fell on her knees for the Act of Adoration, one would have thought she was on Calvary itself. Her respect for her Directors, and especially for N. T. H. Père, may be measured by her belief in their being the representatives to her of God on earth. She would read the precious letters of the T. H. Père on her knees, and when desired by him to write on any subject, she was most careful to use his very words. "It is the voice of God," she would say. Again, in her continual intercourse with the poor, it would frequently happen that she was almost worn out with their numbers and importunity, and that the sisters would often propose to her to put them off to another day. "Not for all the world!" she would exclaim: "If our Saviour asked to speak to you, would you have the face to put Him off, or make Him wait?" One day, when she was overwhelmed with begging letters, one of the sisters asked her, with a smile, "If she did not think our Lord wrote to her rather too often?" "Never too often," replied that faithful servant of the poor: "Ought one ever to weary of listening to other people's troubles, and trying to relieve them?" Thus did she judge of everything. This was the keynote of her life. Seeing God in her

superiors, in her poor, in her companions—in all. And faith of this nature engenders hope. The knowledge of God and belief in His Mysteries, leads necessarily to confidence in His goodness and love. It was not the fear of the slave for the master, but the filial tenderness of the child for the parent, which made her dread to offend Him in the smallest particular. In all her trials, God alone was her stay. She never sought elsewhere either for joy or consolation. To one of her sisters, whom she found discouraged and desponding, she exclaimed: "Ah! my child! If you could but understand the love and tenderness of our Gentle Master, you would have but one fear, that of displeasing Him." But it was during her last illness that her confidence in God shone forth most brightly. "I cannot understand how it is I feel such peace," she said; "but I find it impossible to fear. I, who so dreaded God's judgments, cannot even think of them. I am so afraid of having too much confidence." Some one read aloud the passage, "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant." "I cannot think of His judgments," she repeated; "I can see and feel nothing but His incomparable mercies. The merits of my Saviour are my sole hope and consolation. I feel as if He would open Heaven to me '*gratis.*'" She continued, after a few moments,

“How good God is to me! Our Saviour has paid all my debts. His precious blood has washed away all my sins. Clothed in His righteousness, I have nothing to fear.” A little later she said again: “I cannot understand it, but the thoughts of the *Great Judge* have ceased to alarm me. I see Him only as my Saviour and my Spouse; and at my last hour, I feel His Mother will be there, and will present my poor soul to Him.” What an end for a Sister of Charity, who, in the very face of her Judge, could feel and speak like this!

Of her *Love and Charity* we have already spoken. Her whole life was one expression of it. To love God with all her heart, with all her soul, and with all her strength, and her neighbour as herself, or rather, better than herself—such was her aim and end. She did not understand any love which did not show itself in self-sacrifice. One of the sisters, on her death-bed, said to her with tears, “Dear Mother, you have killed yourself for us.” “Too thankful and happy,” she replied, “to have killed myself in trying to do my duty.” Like the Saint who, when asked “How often one should pray?” replied “Twenty-four hours a day,” the life of the Mère Dévos may be said to have been one continual prayer. She prayed by her carefulness to walk always in God’s sight; by her fervour in

offering up every action and every sacrifice to Him ; by the purity and simplicity of her intentions ; above all, by her constant union with Him—a union which no earthly cares could weaken or interrupt. During her greatest sufferings, the Cross of Christ was her consolation and her joy. Her inability to move in any way in her last illness, added to her suffering. On one occasion, a sister said to her, “ Dear Mother, your bed is very hard ; at any rate, do have a good pillow.” “ Our Master had none,” she replied, with a smile. “ But He did not remain so long on the Cross.” She answered quickly : “ What are my sufferings compared to His ? Was the Column not hard ? Can we not find courage to accept anything for the love of Christ, so that we may be conformed to Him ? Besides, the thought *that it is the will of God* softens everything.” She could not love Our Saviour with such tenderness without a corresponding affection for His Mother. She delighted in studying her life, and meditating on every little circumstance connected with it. The Blessed Virgin’s silence taught her a great deal. She would exclaim : “ Think what Mysteries she might have revealed of the Child Jesus ! But she was silent, always silent. She ‘ kept all His sayings, and pondered them in her heart.’ She never led anything but a hidden life, full of recollection, silence, and prayer. What a model for

us all!" The reciting of the Rosary was one of her favourite exercises. She used to say it every morning at four o'clock, on quitting her room, for fear of being prevented later in the day. One of the sisters asked her for her rosary to keep as a *souvenir*. She replied, "Very willingly; *but do not let me be buried without one.*" She delighted in the Psalms; and when too weak to read them herself, would ask one of the sisters to do so, repeating over and over again the different verses. "How I love that Psalm," she said, "in which David compares the Word of God to 'the lamp which is to lighten his feet,' that Word 'which was sweeter than honey to his mouth.'" Another day, the sister read those words in the Gospel, "The kingdom of God is *witbin* you." She paused, and the Mother said: "I think the best explanation of this reign of God in our hearts is given in the 'Catechism of the Community'; in that part which treats of the Presence of God, and which says 'that He inhabits the soul of the Just as a king on a throne, to whom all the senses and powers obey—'" she stopped, and then added, "Fidelity! How beautiful it is! How one feels the want of it in one's heart. Why cannot we be always faithful?" Her eagerness not to miss the weekly Confession used to amaze the sisters, who could not imagine what she could have to confess; but with the deep humility which ever

accompanies great personal holiness, she would hasten to the Tribunal of Penance, and there with heartfelt sorrow lament the faults of the week—faults which no one but herself could detect—and obtain from that holy Sacrament still greater light and strength for her arduous path. One of the greatest fruits of the Divine Love in her heart was her ardent zeal for souls. She knew but one overwhelming misery in this world, and that was the sin by which God was so continually outraged. To save the commission of any such sin, she would have given her life with joy. This burning love was extended to every one who came within her influence. At Bayonne she would go from house to house, and from family to family, persuading and winning souls to Christ; inducing the men to go to Confession, attend Retreats, and the like. It is no exaggeration to say that she saved thousands in this way. They could not resist her loving pleadings—so much so, that it came to be a bye-word among them, as among the convicts at Rochefort: “No one can resist the *Mère Dévos*.” Again, when any fresh patient came into hospital, she would accost him with the greatest kindness; and then, with great tact, bringing round the conversation to the point she wished, would say, “Have you thought of your religious duties of late? No? Well, perhaps, that was the very reason why our

Good Master sent you to the hospital !” and then she would go on, with loving words, and remembrances of a mother’s love, or of early recollections, to induce them to open their hearts to her, and lead them to find the only true Peace. It was the same with any of the sisters who might be inclined to turn back after once having “put their hands to the plough.” She would receive them without a word of reproach, listen to all they had to say, and then draw such a picture of the joy of giving up all for God, of bearing daily contradictions for His sake, and of being generous in our service towards Him who had given His Life for us, that the most lukewarm felt a new zeal kindled in their hearts, and a determination to persevere in their holy vocation.

The very night before her death she occupied herself in trying to place a young girl who was in a difficult and perilous position. Recommending the case to the sisters, she added : “ Recollect, we must not be content with doing a little good, but the *utmost* good we can do, no matter at what personal cost.”

The same tender charity was shown in all her dealings with the Community. Her presence seemed to breathe the very spirit of peace and love. If she had ever to reprove, it was done with such delicacy that the most sensitive could feel nothing but gratitude. “ I know it is quite

enough to remind you of such things," she would say. "I well know your good intentions, and that a word is enough." When she was dying, she insisted on the doors of her room being left open, for all the sisters to come in who wished to do so. She was told that it would add to her sufferings. "What *does* it signify," she replied; "a little more or a little less, provided no one be saddened or vexed?"

She infused the same spirit of charity and forbearance into the hearts of those who were inclined to magnify little differences of temper which might interrupt the general harmony. "Let all such little things pass by," she said. "Do not answer again; do not even seem to perceive them; the best way is to bear them in silence, and pray. Neglect nothing on your own part to promote peace and unity. Never mind if you are misunderstood; *the Master* sees it, and will reward it. If He be content, what matters all the rest? Why dwell on painful words, or little slights? Perhaps the very people who use them did not think of giving you pain. Don't fill your thoughts with such trifles; learn to *forget*, in the interests of peace." One of the sisters, on her death-bed, asked her for a word of advice. "Be very charitable," she replied, with a tender smile, "and then you will not fear death."

On another occasion, two sisters employed in

the same office complained of each other. One was quick, energetic, and noisy; the other gentle, slow, and timid. "Try," said the Mother (making each see the good points of the other), "to acquire mutually the qualities in which each of you is most wanting. The Grace of God will help you to overcome your natural dispositions. *You can do it*, recollect, if you only try." The sisters at Rochefort often said they could give no greater pain to their Mother than by being found wanting in charity. She, herself, set the best example. However unfit some of the younger sisters might appear for their respective offices, she at once devoted herself, with unalterable patience, to the task of forming them. On one occasion, a singularly awkward sister was sent to her. The others said, laughing, "Allow, dear Mother, that they have chosen out for you, this time, the pearl of the Seminary." "I don't find anything at all the matter with her," replied the Mother with a smile, which closed the mouths of the rest. One of her sisters was in very delicate health. The doctor advised her return to her family. The Mother replied: "Sir, this sister is certainly not strong, but she would break her heart at leaving us, and she works very well at her needle. In spite of her constant ailings, she does more work than many others who cannot sew, and you know that is an essential thing

in the establishment." Her tender consideration met with its reward. The sister was never a burden to the House, and soon after died, in her holy vocation, surrounded with love and care.

The charity of the Mother was still more shown in the case of another sister, who went out of her mind. She would continually come into the Mother's room, interrupting her on every occasion, without the slightest impatience being visible on the countenance of the *Mère Dévos*. "Dear sister," she would say, "go and occupy yourself for a little time at such and such a thing; it will do you good." Very soon, the poor girl became worse, and had to be put in a room at the other end of the house. The Mother would always attend to her herself, take her her breakfast, and try in every way to soothe and quiet her. One of the sisters took upon herself to advise the Mother to send her away as a nuisance. "I hope," replied the Mother, "that it is from want of thought that you have allowed yourself to make a similar proposal;" and, the following Monday, when the sisters were together, she spoke as follows: "I am grieved that some of you should have wished Sister N. to leave the House. Put yourselves in her place. So far from wishing to send her away, I shall keep her as long as it pleases God to afflict her, being quite sure that she will bring down a blessing on us. I hope to do for her as

I should wish to be done for myself." Her loving devotion met with its reward. The sister got well enough to resume the Habit, and it was the Mother who daily led her to the refectory, the dormitory, or the garden, and invented everything she could think of to divert her thoughts. In the same way, she could never understand a superior wishing to get rid of her sick sisters, and wrote repeatedly on the subject as Mère Générale. "Does a mother wish to be quit of a sick child?" she would say. "On the contrary, she redoubles her care and tenderness; and, if nature inspires such sentiments, what ought not Grace to do in souls whose very profession is charity?"

In spite of her innumerable occupations, she always found time, after the refectory at the Maison Mère, to go and visit the sick sisters in the infirmary. It was to them an inexpressible joy. "Here is our Mother!" they would exclaim; and she would go from one to the other, always saying an encouraging, helpful word. "Courage!" she would say. "Recollect, 'the Master' counts all our pains. If we could only think of the joys which await us! It will be such a blessing to have suffered well, when we come to the end! God will reward us a hundredfold." She would dress their wounds herself, and administer in every way to their wants. Thus she passed almost all the times of

recreation. It was her greatest pleasure ; and, when prevented by illness, she would send affectionate messages to them, and any little delicacy, or gift of flowers or fruit which had been sent to herself. Her horror of censorious or uncharitable words was so great that no one dared use such in her presence. Even little fault-finding was not permitted. "Allow, dear Mother," said a sister one day, "that Sister N. sleeps even while she walks." "That may be," she replied ; "but, look at the order in which she keeps her room. Whatever she does, she does well." One day that a public abuse had been spoken of in her presence, she expressed her regret. "But why?" she was asked. "It is a well-known fact." "That may be," she replied ; "but, still, I think silence is more conformable to charity, and to the example of our Lord, and we must guard ourselves from judging anybody." She would not allow herself even that good-natured raillery which is common among the kindest-hearted people. She always feared lest a joke should wound the feelings of others. She had consecrated her tongue to the exercise of charity, and never used it for other purposes. One of the sisters, at recreation, allowed herself to grumble a little at the trouble a poor old man gave her, "who was very 'grumpy' and disagreeable." "What are you saying, my dear child?"

exclaimed the Mother. “It is not thus you must speak of ‘our masters,’ the poor. Never dream of complaining of them; and, when you are tempted to do so, remember Whom they represent.” Not satisfied with her own labours or those of her sisters, she strove to kindle the fire of charity in every heart. She used to say that each person, if they would, might become an apostle of charity and consolation. She tried, therefore, to associate both men and women of every class in the Conferences of St. Vincent, so as to cooperate vigorously in the relief of the poor; and added an immense number of affiliated sisters to the Society. In a word, she did not bear her name in vain.

But, before concluding, we have yet a few words to say on certain other points in her character—her *poverty*, her *detachment* from all earthly things, her spirit of *chastity* and *mortification*, and last, not least, her *obedience* and perfect *conformity to the Divine will*.* She was poor in

* Should our readers be wearied with such minute details of the character of the Mère Dévos, they must recollect that in the uneventful life of a Sister of Charity (except in times of revolution, as in Sicily, or of massacres, as in the Lebanon), there is nothing new or startling to record. The French writer of her Life judged wisely in transcribing those “Golden words,” which will remain to all time in the hearts of her Sisters, to direct and guide them in the many little difficulties of their arduous path; and the translator has followed the same course, feeling how much she was herself indebted to the Mother’s wise and holy counsels.

everything, in spirit and in body, and bore with joy the most rigorous privations. She literally possessed *nothing* of her own ; and when sometimes reproached for the absence of necessaries, would reply, “Had ‘the Master’ all I have on the wood of the Cross ?” At the same time, she insisted on great neatness and cleanliness both in person and clothes, and could not bear to see a torn or stained dress among her sisters. Her greatest pleasure was that of *giving* ; but she did not dare allow herself this intense gratification, except in urgent cases. She looked upon herself as the receiver of the little resources of the Community, but not as being at liberty to dispose of them according to her own inclinations. One of the sisters’ greatest difficulties was to persuade her to wear the necessary clothing required by her fragile health. She was ordered to wear flannel ; but she might as well have put on a hair-shirt, so coarse were her shifts ! She pretended they were to keep her warm ; yet she would hardly allow any one to keep up her fire. But this is the way of the Saints, to neglect their bodies and enrich their souls. The sisters once smuggled an arm-chair into her room ; the next day it had disappeared, and was in the infirmary. “If you were ill, dear Mother, you would want it,” remonstrated the sister. “Very well,” she replied, “then wait till then ; there

will be plenty of time to bring it back." She observed that flowers were daily put at the foot of a little statue of the Blessed Virgin in her room. She asked their price. Being told, she forbade the use of them in future, saying, "Our Mother knows very well that we should like to offer her this little daily homage; but she will be more pleased that we should make the sacrifice for the sake of our poor." At her death, the only things of which they found her possessed, were her Missal, the "Formulaire," and the "Imitation." As to her detachment from earthly affections, she guarded herself and her sisters as carefully as she could from this subtle temptation. Writing once from Bayonne, she said, "As far as I am concerned, I have no fault to find with any of my dear sisters except for the love they bear me, which I fear is too strong and too *human*. I try to combat it by assuming a coldness of manner which I find it difficult to feel." She begged to be employed in Foreign Missions, to replace one or other of the sisters who had died, not as Superior, but as simple sister, adding, "My insufficiency here frightens me; deign to allow me to make this little sacrifice." From the moment she entered the Community, she kept up no communications with her family, except an annual letter; and she never attempted to see them. Having generously broken through

every human tie, she belonged henceforth to God alone and His poor. She allowed no indulgence to natural feelings. On several occasions she received sudden intelligence of the death of relations very near and dear to her. She simply went with the letters into the chapel, and when she returned no trace of emotion was visible. To her niece, whose father was lying at the point of death and whom she surprised in tears, she said, "Dear child! never wish for anything contrary to God's will. He knows all things, and all that He orders is for the best. Let your prayers be simply, 'Not my will but Thine be done.'" This niece had been sent from her own House to Paris, as an agreeable surprise to the Mother, by N. T. H. Père. The first question asked by the Mère Dévos was, "How it was she had come to Paris?" When it was explained to her, she said, "Very well; but do not imagine you must come oftener because I am here. A Sister of Charity should avoid as much as possible all connection with her family. On no account must your sister think of coming up also—it would not be acting according to the Maxims of St. Vincent, who wishes for thorough self-renouncement in his children." In answer to a complaint made to her by her niece, that she was not allowed in all points to conform to the Rule on account of her health, she replied,

“I am sorry for the indulgence for you; but, *above all, you must obey, and obey with a willing mind.* That is what is meant by fulfilling the will of God.” That same niece came up for a Retreat, and saw her a few days before her death. “Be reasonable, my child,” she said, “and do not ask for my recovery, but that I may accomplish the will of God. *Be the day or night more or less suffering, it is all the same for God.*” She would not kiss her, even at the last, although it was the day of the Renewal of the Vows, which is generally a great fête; but the Mère Dévos would allow no distinction between her and the other sisters. In the same way, she would only be nursed by the sisters of the Maison Mère. “Own, dear Mother,” said one of them to her, “that you would have been glad if other circumstances had brought to Paris at this moment one of our *sœurs* from La Rochelle.” “Yes,” replied the Mother, “if I had listened only to my own heart, I should have been too glad to see them once again! *but we must learn the meaning of perfect sacrifice.*” When it was proposed at the last to send for her own family, she opposed it, saying, “For a long time my ‘family’ has been that of God.” She was afraid lest any earthly tenderness should distract her thoughts from her Saviour. She desired but to be like Him, “who had not where to lay His head;” and her last

words, murmured in the death agony, were, “Deus meus et omnium.”

Purity and modesty had been her gifts from the cradle. When people did not know her personally, at Rosny or Bayonne, they described her as, “*the sister who always looks down on the ground.*” Going or coming, in or out of the house, she always had the same grave, gentle, recollected manner — the same modest and virtuous appearance, which imposed on the most careless, and insensibly, even when very young, influenced every one with whom she came in contact. She was never a single moment idle. She looked upon time as the price of the blood of Christ. One might have said that she had made a compact with God never to give any rest to her body for fear of letting her charity cool, or of robbing the poor and the Community to whom she had dedicated her life. “Even with working from morning till night, I cannot do enough,” she would say. “What would it be if I gave myself time to amuse myself? We shall rest ‘*up there.*’” At other times she would say, “How short life is. It is the only little moment given us in which to work for and glorify our Master. If we did but know its value!” Whatever she did, she did as well as she possibly could, and with such fervour, that it put all her companions to shame. She never would allow any

difficulty to deter her. Her motto seemed to be "to conquer or die;" and her energy would never allow her to rest till she had accomplished whatever she had once undertaken. Such was her exterior vigilance. Her interior mortification was continual. The words of our Lord, "Whoever will be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me," seemed to be always present to her mind. Perhaps she carried this virtue to excess; but this defect, if it be one, only served to unite her more closely with God and His Saints. To crucify her nature in every possible manner was her rule of life, and one from which she never for an instant deviated. For the same reason, she ignored everything outside her duties. Once at Rochefort, one of the officers was amazed at finding that the Mother did not know of an event of which all France was ringing. "Sir," said the Mother, "you must not think it strange; but we, poor Sisters of Charity, have not the time to occupy ourselves with what happens in the world." Even religious exercises, beautiful ceremonies, or wonderful sermons, which would have been an intense pleasure to her, she thought it right to deny herself, often sending her sisters on such occasions, but remaining herself with the sick and poor. Many a time her advice and consolation were sought for by people in the world, who

would pour out their griefs to her with bitter tears. Sometimes she would gently smile at their tales, and they would exclaim, "Do you not feel for us, then?" And she would reply, "My poor children, I do indeed; but you forget that you are 'bought with a price.' You belong to our Lord. You must follow in His steps. There is no way but that of the Cross. To one who loves God, what are the worst of human miseries? And if you have to drink the cup of suffering and of humiliation to the very dregs, can you complain when you remember the treatment of our Saviour? 'The servant is not greater than his Lord.' All this sorrow is a proof not of His anger but of His love. We should learn not only to bear patiently, but to 'rejoice' in tribulations, with the Apostle of old." She did not preach what she did not practise. She studied all day long to die to herself, and succeeded so well, that *nothing* at last could disturb her peace. One day a sister, astonished at the equanimity with which she bore continual interruptions, exclaimed, "My dear Mother, you do not seem to feel the bother these people give you."—"No one bothers me," replied the Mother, smiling. "What, not this succession of visitors, always coming and going, and not leaving you a moment's peace? Why, it's enough to drive one wild."—"No," she again replied, "it does

not trouble me in the least, for I know that everything that comes is from the hand of God." In her last illness, when disgust at every species of food almost prevented her being able to take any nourishment, the sisters would try and think of everything which could possibly tempt her, and obedience compelled her to obey them. " Could you take this or that with pleasure?" they would ask. And she would reply, " With pleasure? O! I could not use such a term for things like that; but I could take it without repugnance." She hesitated even to smell a lemon when continual sickness caused attacks of faintness; and reproached herself with having said " I am very thirsty" when exhausted by hours of agony. In fact, she was *dead* to every cry of nature, to every human affection, to every earthly enjoyment, above all, to her own will; and thus did she conform herself to the image of Him " who made Himself obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross," until the moment when she could exclaim with Him, " *It is finished.*"

Her *obedience* was as perfect as all the rest. It was prompt, constant, and universal. The lightest word of N. T. H. Père was received by her with a faith and a zeal which doubled the value of her instant submission. " There is no Grace but in acting in exact obedience to our superiors," she would say, " and God blesses no other means."

It was the same with the doctors when she was ill. On several occasions, different remedies were tried, which only served to increase her sufferings without producing the desired result. Her sisters would implore her to discontinue them. "No," she would say; "let me do as I have been told. If the doctors have made a mistake in their treatment, *we never can be wrong in obeying.*"

Her devotion to the Rule was pushed sometimes to the extremest limits. One day during her illness she asked a sister after the Act of Adoration to give her some Holy Water, adding, "It is to wash away my act of infidelity for having spoken to you during the time for Silence."—"But," answered the sister, "you spoke for a good purpose."—"It's all the same," replied the Mother. "It was not necessary for me to anticipate the hour. I might very well have waited." When her state of weakness and exhaustion did not allow of her being left alone, it was a constant sorrow for her to be the cause of any one missing the Exercises of the Community. She listened for every stroke of the bell, and would say, "Go, I implore you. I am very happy alone with God and His Angels. The bell has rung. You must set a good example."

To one of the sisters who asked her how she could avoid occasional distractions in prayer? she replied, "*Be very regular;*" and being again

asked, she repeated the words, "Be very regular and obedient to the most minute directions of our holy Rule. If you do this, you will soon say your prayers without distraction."

If she was thus obedient to her earthly superiors, and to the Rules of her holy Order, still more perfect were her obedience and submission to the will of God. No matter what sorrow, what privation, what suffering she had to endure, "Fiat voluntas tua," were the words not only on her lips, but rooted in her heart. She rested in the love of God, as a little child in the arms of its mother. It was the secret of her habitual calmness and tranquillity. "'The Master' knows what is best for us; we have only to obey," was her favourite saying. When there was a slight amelioration in her worst symptoms towards the end of her illness, the sisters round her joyfully exclaimed, "Dear mother, you are better; we begin to breathe again!" "Wish only that I may fulfil the will of God," was the dying Mother's answer. "I abandon myself entirely to the Everlasting Arms.". One who knew her intimately, said, after her death, "The Mère Dévos was not only a Saint, but a great Saint; and do you wish to know how she attained to this? *By refusing nothing to our Lord.*"

The year 1860 had begun. On the 25th January, the Feast of the Conversion of St.

Paul, a touching ceremony took place at St. Lazare, to verify the authenticity of the relics of the venerable Martyr, M. Jean Gabriel Perboyre, which had recently been brought back from China by Monseigneur Danicourt, one of the venerable Chinese Bishops. The Mère Dévos was invited by N. T. H. Père to take part in the ceremony. It lasted from eight o'clock in the morning till two in the afternoon. The head of the venerable Saint was placed in the arms of the Mother, who received it with the ardent faith which so eminently characterised her. She pressed it religiously to her heart. What passed at that moment in her soul? God only knows. But from that night the bad symptoms returned which had preceded her previous illness. On going back to the Rue de Bac, she determined to continue the visits she had been paying on the occasion of the New Year, and went to the sisters in the parish of St. André des Arts, without the accompanying sisters discovering any change in her face. All of a sudden, she exclaimed, "I feel sick," and instantly fainted away. Their consternation was great; such a thing had never happened to her in her life. But faithful to her usual habits, the moment she recovered, she desired the sister to hold her tongue about it, and say nothing at the Maison Mère for fear of alarming

them. The next morning found her, as usual, up at the first stroke of four, and in the chapel. But the mortal blow had been struck. That evening she had a frightful hemorrhage; and the 3rd of February, that is, eight days after, the same thing occurred at the hour of rising. The sister who slept in her room conjured her to remain in bed. She would not do so until the assistant-superior had been consulted, so that she might not act except under obedience. The medical men were hastily summoned, and discovered a rupture of a blood-vessel near the stomach, which gave them little hope of recovery. N. T. H. Père had a painful presentiment of her approaching end, and thought it right to give her notice of it, as well as the Community. The order of the doctor compelled her to keep her bed; but it did not prevent her attending to her duties, receiving the sisters who were about to make their final Vows, and the like, while she prepared herself earnestly for the great change. She never concealed her danger from herself or those about her, though she never alluded unnecessarily to the subject. For four weeks this state of things continued, and hopes began to be entertained of her recovery, when a fresh crisis of the malady brought her again to the verge of death, and destroyed all expectation of amelioration. The

evening of the 23rd February, she begged to see all the young sisters, one by one, who were about to take the Habit the following month. In spite of her intense weakness, no persuasion could induce her to omit this duty. The 24th being the Feast of St. Matthew, she prepared herself to receive the Holy Communion, which was then always brought to her room. Already the Blessed Sacrament had been placed on the little table which served for an altar; when they perceived that instead of being, as usual, with her hands clasped in adoration, she had fainted and fallen back on her pillow. The length of the fainting, and the hemorrhage which ensued, made all present fear that her last hour was at hand. But God willed it otherwise. As she had taught her sisters how to live, so she was now to teach them how to die; and this great lesson necessitated longer suffering. The doctor arrived, and said it was impossible to say what would be the consequence of the crisis, and advised that she should receive the Last Sacraments. N. T. H. Père was fortunately at St. Lazare. As soon as the sad news was brought to him, he hastened to the Maison Mère. "This time, Father, *it is for good and all,*" she said, when he approached her bed. The painful impression produced by her words may be conceived. After her confession, all was

prepared for the last sad and touching offices. Our Lord, as if touched by her sorrow at having missed her morning's Communion, was about to fulfil her ardent longing. The mournful sound of the bell summoned the sisters to unite their prayers and tears at the foot of the altar. N. T. H. Père himself administered the Extreme Unction, assisted by the Père Directeur. The rooms were open, so that all might assist who could. Those who penetrated within the chamber of death, saw the much-loved face with an expression of inexpressible happiness and peace in spite of its deadly paleness. But the dying Saint herself saw nothing but God, thought of nothing but her union with Him, and already saw the Heavens open to receive her. At the moment when N. T. H. Père presented to her the Sacred Host, she insisted, in spite of her extreme weakness, on pronouncing out-loud her Religious Vows, and asking, publicly, pardon for her faults. This act, as touching as it was solemn, made everyone burst into tears. The sad ceremony filled the whole house with mourning; but as for the Mother herself, it seemed to have rained a torrent of Graces upon her, so that she could not help saying, "I wish for nothing but what God pleases; still I think it would be impossible to die at a better moment than now; and never could I hope for

more abundant consolations." N. T. H. Père issued this day a Circular, announcing to all the sisters the alarming state of their venerable Mother, and his intimate conviction that God was about to call her to Himself. During the whole of this memorable day the Mother remained almost entirely silent, though now and then ejaculations of this kind would burst from her lips. "My God, watch over the Society!" "Protect it ever!" "Give it a Superior who shall repair the evil I have done!" "My Father, I wish but to conform my will to Thine." "Cut, rend, do with me as You will." She asked one of the sisters to repeat the Psalm "Quam dilecta" to her, and then added, "What comforting words! When you recite them to me, I forget all my suffering." In the middle of it all, she suddenly recollected something she had wished to do for the education of the children in one of the distant Missions. She tried to write, and sign a few lines. She could not even hold the pen. She forced herself to do so, however, exclaiming, "I *must* do it. I cannot miss the occasion of doing something for those poor little ones." At last, she accomplished it, and fell back on her pillow tranquil and happy. By a fortunate coincidence, H. E., the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, came that very day to the Community, and would himself see and bless the dying Mother. N. T.

H. Père asked of him the permission to have, every day, the Mass performed in her room, and that she might daily receive the Holy Communion, as long as it should please God to spare her. The Cardinal granted it with the tenderest benevolence; and, the very next day, the venerable Mother had the double privilege which so greatly exceeded her fondest hopes. She could not express her thankfulness and joy. "What shall I render unto the Lord?" was her first cry. "I should have thought it a sin even to have entertained such a desire, poor, miserable woman that I am! I cannot understand such great mercy." The provisional altar had been placed at the foot of her bed; from that moment she would always have the curtain left open, that she might see it continually. One of the Missionaries of St. Lazare said the daily Mass, and six sisters, in turn, were chosen from the Maison Mère, that they might have the happiness of receiving the Holy Communion with her; and afterwards, a sign or a smile of affectionate recognition even when she could not speak. Four weeks elapsed from the day of her receiving Extreme Unction, till the one which witnessed the consummation of the sacrifice—weeks of patience, of peace, of perfect abandonment of herself into the hands of God, and of bright example to her children. The doctors absolutely

forbade any fatigue or exertion. She submitted; but it was the sacrifice which cost her the most. Nothing was left to her but to suffer and obey. By the paternal kindness of N. T. H. Père, the sisters came from all quarters to see their venerable Mother once more. She was horrified at their having come solely for her sake, and often repeated: "How much too good everyone is to me." Her angelic patience amazed the attendant sisters. She blamed herself for the least expression of suffering which now and then escaped her. "I am still so soft," she would say, "and complain so easily." Her Confessor made it a case of conscience with her, to accept whatever was necessary for her failing nature. She was even then so afraid of self-indulgence. Sometimes the sisters were prevented from approaching her, for fear of increasing her fatigue. She would utter a gentle reproach. "Should not a daughter always have access to a mother?" she would say. "Let them come in, I entreat you, if it be only to say 'good morning.'" When she spoke, it was in few words, but all of Heaven and of the goodness of God. A learned and pious ecclesiastic, who went to see her, said afterwards, "I have attended dying beds for thirty years, but never yet met with a soul so near perfection. One must have laboured long to learn how to die,

before one can be willing to accept, with equal readiness, life or death." Sometimes she reproached herself for having felt joy at the idea of leaving the earth. The Psalm "Lætatus sum," reassured her. She knew a great part of the Holy Scriptures by heart. "I will take the chalice of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord!" she exclaimed, one day, adding: "I think we may explain the word 'chalice' in many ways. 'I will take the chalice,' that is, all the sufferings of the day, and offer them as a thank-offering for His innumerable benefits. *To accept all and offer up all, that is true thankfulness.*" When she was unable to take food, or scarcely to articulate, she murmured feebly: "The Great Feast is always spread for me. I have the Bread of Life; what matters other privations?" "My life is at an end," she would say: "It is finished. I have the deepest confidence in the mercy of God. 'According to your faith, so be it done to you.' I count on those words." One of the sisters was pitying her for her compulsory inaction. She replied: "It does not trouble me, as the Master wills it so. Till now I have tried to unite my work with the labours of Our Saviour, without thinking of uniting my rest with the repose He is taking on the right hand of the Father; but my good Angel has taught me this little secret, which I now always practise." The

thought of our Lord was ever present to her. She was asked one morning how she had passed the night. She answered: "I had a nice sleep, and accepted it thankfully. It came into my head how our Lord deigned to accept little pleasures and alleviations from His Mother, as he equally accepted the tortures of His dolorous Passion."

On the 19th of March, the Feast of St. Joseph, at half-past four in the morning, a fresh attack came on, even more severe than the previous one. In the midst of her agony were heard the words: "My heart is ready, O Lord! My heart is ready. All for God." She roused herself to thank the doctors, and express her confidence in their skill and care: "You have done your utmost," she said, "but the 'Great Physician' has decreed otherwise. I am not the less grateful to you for all your kindnesses." She could no longer take any kind of food, but one of the sisters brought her something to moisten her mouth: "It is not worth while," she said; adding, softly: "Jesus does better—I love nothing else in this world." On the 24th she felt her end was very near. "I am going," she said; "and when I think of it I cannot contain my joy. I shall hear the Song the Virgins sing. I shall see the King in His beauty!" All were anxious to

draw near to her once more. The nursing-sister expressed her regret at this being allowed: "Do not be vexed," she whispered; "It is so sweet to sacrifice oneself for our Lord; *to give one's life for others for the love of His Love.*" The 23rd March was the day of the Renewal of the Vows. "I cannot pray much now," said the venerable Mother, "but I offered up to God every beat of my heart last night, for the intention of obtaining His pardon for the faults we have committed against our sacred engagements, and the Grace to be faithful unto death." The night had been calm. After N. H. T. Père had, according to custom, on that day, said his Mass at the Maison Mère, and received the Vows of so many faithful hearts, he went up to the Mother, and found her unusually well. She smiled, and said: "It is true, I am better—there is a change—I do not feel the same: *but to-morrow*; who can tell? It would be too great a privilege to die on such a great Feast!" She begged to see the sisters at the Hour of Recreation, and gave to each of them a little picture of "Our Lady of Holy Hope." It was the last time they were gathered round her living form. "I would gladly consent to live on and labour for our Lord," she said, to one who was talking of the inexpressible joy her recovery would cause,

“but I feel I am *used up*. I should only be a burden, for I can do no more ; is it not better, then, to go when the Master deigns to call me ?” The next day she sent for the Mère Montcellet, and urged upon her to undertake the responsibilities of Superior, which she felt herself unable to continue. The Mère Montcellet resisted. The Mère Dévos exhausted herself by fresh arguments, and finally told her that she had spoken to N. T. H. Père, and only implored her not to oppose her will to his. The Mère Montcellet repeated, “It is impossible !” and, for fear of prolonging so painful a discussion, left her. It was just five o’clock ; and then commenced that cruel agony which lasted till the end. It was accompanied by an icy coldness, hemorrhage, faintings, and all the worst symptoms. The Père Directeur hastened to give her the last Plenary Indulgence, while N. T. H. Père and the doctors were again summoned. Her death-struggle was terrible. In the midst of it she cried out unceasingly, “Pray, my Father, pray for me, I implore you ;” and if they paused for a moment she would renew the cry. One of the doctors, kneeling with the sisters at the foot of the bed, exclaimed, “What a Saint ! I cannot relieve her. I can but pray with you, that what she wishes may be granted her, and that you

may receive the consolations which you will so greatly need at losing such a Mother." N. T. H. Père spoke to her from time to time during those five hours of cruel agony. "Ma Mère, you are going to leave us, but you will not really quit us. Your spirit will be ever united with ours." He continued, "You die Mother of the Society; remember you carry your obligations with you to Heaven." She replied, "Yes, Father, I will try and labour for it there; and, if God permits, I will renounce a portion of the joys He may destine for me, so that they may fall in redoubled graces and blessings on the Family of St. Vincent." N. T. H. Père then said, "See! St. Vincent and our Venerable Mother will come and assist you to pass through the dark River; the sisters who have preceded you to Heaven are likewise awaiting your coming!" With a fresh effort, the dying Mother said, "My Father, I ask your forgiveness for all the sorrow and trouble I have given you." N. T. H. Père replied, "My Mother, you have never given me any pain. I can only thank God for it. You have, on the contrary, continually edified me by your obedience, your fidelity, and your devotion." At nine o'clock, the doctors believing that the struggle might be prolonged till the following morning, N. T. H. Père returned to St. Lazare.

“Adieu, Mère Dévos,” he said to her, “I am obliged to leave you now, but I will see you early to-morrow morning.” “*In Heaven*, my Father!” she exclaimed. “You will not forget me there?” he added. “I reckon on you.” She feebly answered, “My Father, I feel too much what I owe you to be wanting in that.” N. T. H. Père, being no longer able to restrain his emotion, left her. Her sufferings continued, but her life was ebbing away rapidly. From time to time the Père Directeur spoke a few words of consolation, to which she eagerly responded. Sometimes she murmured, “God only.” “Thy will, O Lord!” “My love, my only love!” Suddenly she cried out, “Heaven,” “And this very night,” “What joy!” The officiating sister, seeing that the last moment was at hand, said, “My Mother, when the venerable Mother, Mademoiselle Le Gras, was on the point of quitting the world, she blessed all her children who were, like ourselves, assembled round her dying bed. Do not refuse to bless us also, and to bless with us all the Society, both now and for the time to come.” “*I am not worthy to do so*,” she replied, with a strong voice. “My Mother, I beseech you, do not refuse us this last favour,” continued the sister. Then, with a supreme effort, the Mère Dévos raised herself a little in her bed,

and distinctly pronounced the words, "*I pray the Lord Jesus Christ that He may bless you, now and ever.*" Her lips still moved in prayer. The Père Directeur repeated the words, "In manus tuas, Domine," several times. The clock struck ten; her head fell back; she sighed gently, and with that sigh her pure spirit left the body, and that so gently that for some moments no one understood that all was over. Then the Père Directeur began repeating out loud the "De Profundis," and the sisters gave free vent to their sorrow as they knelt by those sacred remains.

Thus died the Mère Dévos, on the Tuesday in Passion Week, at the age of fifty-six, in the very month and the very week which witnessed, two hundred years before, the last struggles of the Venerable Madame Le Gras, the Foundress and first Superior of the Sisters of Charity. The expression of her face after death was beautiful. She seemed asleep; but an ineffable peace was stamped on her features. The next morning the solemn bell of the Community announced to the whole House their irreparable loss. A notice of the event was sent to all the sisters, who hastened from all sides to pay their last tribute of affection and respect to the holy dead. The body was left in the room in which she died, the furniture

being removed, and the whole being beautifully arranged and decorated with innumerable flowers and lights. It was like an exquisite sanctuary, meet for the temporary resting-place of her whose whole face expressed the sanctity and beatitude which she had, doubtless, already found in the Bosom of our Lord.

The next few days were most touching from the spectacle they presented of the love and veneration with which she was regarded, not only by the Community, but by all who were admitted to pray by that inanimate form.

At last, came the moment when the coffin was to receive the honoured body, which remained unaltered in the slightest particular. The sisters dressed her, as usual, in the Habit, with her rosary, as she had desired, in her hands. The coffin was exposed in the vestibule of the refectory; a crown of white roses and two branches of lilies being laid on the pall. N. T. H. Père would himself officiate at the ceremony, in spite of his overpowering emotion, which alarmed the assistants. At the moment of the Absolution, his fatherly heart fairly broke down, and tears choked his utterance. An enormous number of Missionaries, sisters, orphans, and lady associates were gathered in the chapels and courts surrounding the bier. When the mournful

procession was formed to convey the body to the Cemetery, there was one mourning carriage for N. T. H. Père and the Father-Director, and for one or two of the clergy, but eight hundred sisters followed on foot, besides five hundred from the Seminary, an immense deputation from the affiliated ladies, and last—not least, the orphans from the different Houses of Paris, who were at least as numerous as the sisters. This imposing Procession struck all spectators with astonishment. “*Who was this*” whose mortal remains were followed to the grave with such demonstrations of veneration and love? And the touching spectacle produced its fruits. More than one wandering soul was thereby brought back into the Master’s fold; and thus she, who had devoted her life to save sinners, became, after her death, equally an instrument in God’s hands to lead them to repentance.

There remained but one unfulfilled wish of the departed—the election of her successor. The choice fell unanimously on the one marked out by her, whom six previous years of self-devotion had endeared to the Community, and whose charity and zeal were only equalled by her prudence and discretion. In consequence, the reception of the Mère Montcellet was fixed for the 1st April. All the sisters assembled to

receive her in the Chamber of the Community ; but owing to the mourning felt by every heart in the Maison Mère, the great bell was not rung. The new Mother-General, overwhelmed with grief, endeavoured to say a few words, but tears choked her utterance, and were responded to by the sisters. They separated in silence. The remembrance of the departed was too recent to admit of any further ceremony.

It would be impossible to describe the sensation produced by her death throughout France, or the eagerness with which every scrap belonging to her was asked for and distributed. The letters received on the occasion would fill volumes ; but all were agreed on one point, that there was a fresh Saint in Heaven. "When I wish to pray for her," wrote a holy priest, "something stops me ; *involuntarily, indeed, I invoke her.*" This sentiment was universal. To this hour, the recollection of her words, her actions—above all, of her example, acts as the most powerful incentive to good in the Community. "What would the Mère Dévos say or do in such a case ?" is the constant resolver of doubts and perplexities in the minds of the sisters. Her grave, only distinguished by a simple Cross of stone, is the favourite place of resort on Sundays and Festivals, and the perfume

of her virtues seems to breathe fresh sweetness in the hearts of her children.

We will conclude with the words of N. T. H. Père: "This *second Mother of the Society* was given as an example to the age in which we live. By the fruits of her edifying life and death, we feel 'that the Grace of God has not been received in vain.'

"This true daughter of our holy Founder was not meant to die in the obscurity of a private House. She was a treasure which belonged to the whole Community; and, therefore, in spite of her repugnance, this holy woman bowed her head under the heavy cross of her election as its Superior, and crowned her merits by this last act of abnegation and submission to the Divine will. Our Lord wished to show us, by her example, how the greatest devotion to her vocation could be combined with the most perfect union with God; and how by the practice of a life, as simple as it was beautiful, the soul could attain to a degree of sanctity which was as surprising as it was sublime. It is true that the Sovereign Master would not allow her to complete her task. He called His faithful servant to Himself early, that she might be associated with Him in His Glory; but He allowed her to leave with the *Maison Mère* the previous inheritance of

her example and her counsels, so that, together with the Foundress of her Order, she may be venerated and imitated as the model of what a Sister of Charity should be. Let us not be content with admiring her; let us learn, as she did, at her Saviour's feet, lessons of fidelity, generosity, self-denial, and devotion to His service, so that we may walk with her in the path of perfection, and be permitted to share in her reward."



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